MEDIA ACCESS TO UNITED STATES MILITARY OPERATIONS: GRENADA AND BEYOND

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B. S., Kansas State University, 1983

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements of the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Journalism and Mass Communications

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1989

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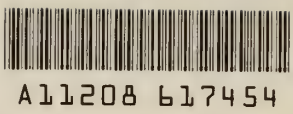
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The White House Press Room held an angry and bewildered group of reporters the morning of October 25, 1983. A United States military task force had just invaded the Caribbean island of Grenada. No news media representative had been informed of the invasion in advance, nor had a single journalist accompanied the task force. In fact, less than fourteen hours earlier, White House spokesman Larry Speakes had declared that a United States invasion of Grenada was "preposterous."[1]

The government had deliberately made no plans for the media to be on hand to report the Grenada invasion. When the operations plan was submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it called for the exclusion of the press during the invasion and initial fighting.[2]

In a news conference held shortly after President Reagan announced the invasion, reporters were told they had been excluded because of the necessity for complete surprise. In addition, they were told, there were concerns over correspondents' safety.[3]

Understandably, reporters were not receptive to either of these explanations. In reply to the secrecy issue, they responded that there had been rumors regarding an invasion for several days, and Radio Grenada had even broadcast that the island was about to be invaded. Washington reporters claimed that they were among the few

who didn't know about it.[4] One reporter said, "The only people who were surprised by this are right here in this room."[5]

In response to the safety issue, the journalists found it incredible that the administration was concerned with their safety. They said there has never been a United States conflict in which the press has not taken risks alongside the military. Custom has put the press on the battlefield since William Howard Russell first wrote accounts of the Crimean War in 1854.[6] To even consider this issue was, said one correspondent, an insult to those men and women who died covering wars.[7]

The perception of many media representatives was that the administration was trying to hide something. Said ABC's Sam Donaldson, "I'm insistent that what you're doing here is covering up."[8] Howard Simons, then managing editor of The Washington Post, said, "All you do when you create a blackout such as this, is to create the idea there's a cover up, there's something to hide."[9] Drew Middleton later wrote in an article for The New York Times Magazine:

> The impression left by the American government's reporting of the first two days of the Grenada operation leaves the distinct feeling that the objective was not to present the full facts of the matter but rather to make the most favorable impression on the public at large.[10]

In the meantime, seven journalists did manage to get to Grenada in a small fishing boat shortly after the invasion, but were unable to file their stories because the telex and telephone lines had been damaged during the fighting. Four members of the group accepted an offer to be airlifted to the USS Guam, hoping they could file their stories from the ship. Instead, they were held incommunicado for two

days, not even allowed to notify their home offices as to their whereabouts.[11]

Other journalists attempted to reach Grenada by private boat, but were harassed and warned off by Navy patrol boats. Photographers on Barbados were not allowed to take pictures of military equipment or soldiers. One photographer had his film seized by Navy personnel because he had taken pictures of troops. The Federal Communications Commission even warned ham radio operators not to allow news organizations to use their frequencies to conduct interviews.[12]

Not until the day after the invasion did Pentagon officials approve preparations to accommodate the growing number of media representatives. An inter-service public affairs team was dispatched to Barbados, where it established a Joint Information Bureau (JIB). However, the bureau had no phones, no direct communication link to the Army command post at Point Salines, no transportation, and no guidance on how to handle the frustrated press.[13]

On October 27, two days after the invasion, reporters finally were allowed onto Grenada. Small groups of twelve to twenty-four journalists were taken by military transport to the island, where they were escorted on carefully guided tours and not allowed to go to units in action.[14]

Given this treatment, it's no wonder that the media were disgruntled. The government's intentional exclusion of the media during the Grenada invasion was unprecedented in American history.[15] Every major news organization protested the exclusion. Editors

complained that the action went "beyond the normal limits of military censorship."[16]

An ad hoc committee of press organizations considered bringing a lawsuit against the Reagan administration.[17] The group decided not to pursue that course of action. Instead, it put together a "Statement of Principle on Press Access to Military Operations," calling on the Reagan administration to recognize the right of the press to cover United States military operations.[18] In response, a special committee of press representatives and top White House officials met to establish guidelines that would enable the media to cover future military actions. Although the meeting involved a detailed discussion of the issues, no decision was made concerning media coverage of future combat operations.[19]

In the meantime, the Pentagon established the Media/Military Relations Panel to develop proposals for future press coverage of military conflicts. Retired Army Major General Winant Sidle was appointed by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to head the committee comprised of seven military representatives and seven media representatives. The committee's findings, known as the Sidle Report, reaffirmed the media's right of access and established a plan to include the media in future military operations. However, Pentagon spokesman Michael Burch said that the military would have the final say and that access would be determined on a case-by-case basis.[20]

The recommendations in the Sidle report were initiated, but the skeptical attitude of senior military officers and the difficulty of

planning for the media during rapid deployment operations indicate that this issue remains unsettled.

Purpose

After the Grenada episode, scholars and journalists wrote articles about the conflict of responsibilities between professional soldiers and journalists which affects media coverage of military activities. While Pentagon and administration officials believed that they were protecting the security of the operation by excluding the press, the media perceived their exclusion to be a violation of the right of a free press.

The purpose of this report is to examine the current issues involving media access to battlefield events during combat operations.

Such an examination will provide useful information in designing future policies for media coverage of military conflicts. It also will allow journalists and military officers to view the issue from one another's perspective and help develop an appreciation and understanding of divergent points of view.

Methodology

This study begins with a historical overview of media coverage of military combat operations. To understand how the military/media relationship evolved, it is important to have an accurate picture of the historic relationship between the military and the media.

Next, the study focuses on the media access debate concerning the Grenada invasion. The study examines the causes that led the military to break tradition and deny media access to Grenada during the

invasion. In addition, the study examines media arguments to justify media coverage of combat operations. This portion of the report involves qualitative research using professional media publications, law journals, general readership periodicals, and professional military journals. Professional media journals include Editor & Publisher, Journalism Quarterly, Nieman Reports, Washington Journalism Review, ASNE Bulletin, Quill, and Columbia Journalism Review. Law journals include The Georgetown Law Journal, International Law and Politics, Temple Law Quarterly, and Suffolk University Law Review. General readership periodicals include The Washington Post, USA Today, U.S. News and World Report, New York Times Magazine, Newsweek, and Time. Military journals include Parameters, Military Review, and Military Media Review.

Finally, post-Grenada developments are examined to determine the present condition of the media/military relationship regarding wartime maneuvers. Interviews were conducted with media and military representatives concerning the effectiveness of press pools to cover military operations, and media and military publications were qualititatively examimed to determine the various points-of-view.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL ACCESS TO MILITARY OPERATIONS

Historically, the American press has had broad access to military operations involving American forces. The controversy over freedom of the press versus national security has been an issue since the founding of the United States. But only occasionally has access been denied during military operations. National security in wartime has traditionally been preserved through some form of censorship, not through denial of access to the battlefield.

Isaiah Thomas, patriot editor of the Massachusetts Spy, was an eyewitness of the first battle of the American Revolution. His published report of the battle is considered to be the most notable reporting of that conflict.[1] However, most newspapers relied on eyewitness accounts of soldiers writing letters home, official and semiofficial messages, and clippings from other newspapers for reports on the war.[2]

Spokesmen appealed to the public in passionate and biased articles in publications expressing the views of the Tories, Whigs and Radicals. Many publishers held strong views concerning the revolution and some found that freedom of expression was not unconditional.

Tory publisher Jemmy Rivington was willing to present both sides of the political picture, but was charged with being a traitor by his

opponents. He complained in his paper that his press was open to publication from all parties, but that when he published sentiments which were opposed to the views of some groups, he was considered an enemy of his country. His wartime paper, Royal Gazette, survived the Revolution but he was burned in effigy by mobs for expressing his view, and his shop was raided and destroyed more than once by mobs. Other Tory publishers were threatened by organizations such as the Sons of Liberty, forcing most of them out of business.[3]

The New England press took an anti-war posture during the War of 1812. Western frontiersmen forced military action and used the western press as leverage to get public opinion on their side. War stories came primarily from letters written by soldiers to their families. There were no war correspondents. Censorship was not practiced; news traveled so slowly it was not needed.[4]

The Mexican War of 1846 was the first American war to have news coverage provided by civilian newspaper correspondents. The invention of the telegraph allowed fast transmission of news. By making use of the telegraph, pony express, railroads, and steamers, the press established a rapid communications link. It was so effective and so much faster than military couriers that President Polk learned of the victory at Vera Cruz from the publisher of the Baltimore Sun.[5] Reporters for New Orleans' newspapers accompanied American forces and sent back accounts of military engagements. Their accounts of the war were carried eastward to be reprinted in eastern papers days after the event.[6]

The Civil War was the first American conflict extensively covered by reporters with eyewitness accounts of the war.[7] Initially, war correspondents traveled with units and had complete access to the armies. But news was transmitted by telegraph so rapidly that it created security problems for the armies. When commanders realized that the enemy was obtaining information through the press, they decided that some arrangement must be reached to protect military interests. For the first time, censorship and access to the battlefield became an issue.[8] But freedom of the press was a firm tradition in America by that time and was recognized as necessary for a democratic government, so restrictions on the press were not strongly enforced.[9]

Censorship was applied in a haphazard manner early in the war. General George B. McClellan tried to devise a voluntary censorship program, but the restrictions were confusing and the responsibility was divided among different governmental departments. Later, the program was placed under the responsibility of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton.[10] He improved the program, but he also suppressed information damaging to the Northern cause by altering casualty figures and withholding news. He suspended newspapers that broke his rules and even arrested editors.[11]

No formal policy was ever established restricting access to the battlefield. Some commanders supported press coverage. General Irvin McDowell said, "I have made arrangements for the correspondents to take to the field . . . and I have suggested to them that they should wear a white uniform to indicate the purity of their character."[12]

Other commanders devised their own policies to exclude the press. General William T. Sherman's relations with the press were legendary. He resented the press and did not want them traveling with his forces. He said, "Never had an enemy a better corps of spies than our army carries along, paid, transported, and fed by the United States."[13] When told that three correspondents had been killed by an artillery shell, he reportedly said, "Good, now we shall have news of hell before breakfast."[14]

The newspapers charged Sherman with incompetence and insanity and said he had a disregard for his men and a willingness to sacrifice them heartlessly. Of this, he said, "None has given me more pain than the assertion that my troops were disaffected, mutinous, and personally opposed to me. This is false, false as hell."[15]

Sherman appreciated the influence the press had on public opinion. In his memoirs he concluded:

> Yet so greedy are the people at large for war news, that it is doubtful whether any army commander can exclude all reporters, without bringing down on himself a clamor that may imperil his own safety. Time and moderation must bring a just solution to this modern difficulty.[16]

The relationship between the military and the press improved during the the Spanish American War of 1898.[17] The war in Cuba was an ideal one for reporters. Public interest was easily maintained because it was a popular war, Cuba was close to the United States, and the war lasted only a short while. The major military battles were contained in a relatively small geographical area.[18] Despite the irresponsibility shown by some newspapers of that era, the 200

reporters who covered the war had unrestricted access with almost no censorship.[19]

During this era, the United States was engaged in expanding overseas trade and establishing itself as a world power. Military intervention in Nicaragua, Haiti, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic demonstrated that the United States intended to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, which was a U.S. foreign policy that opposed European control or influence in the Western Hemisphere. Military intervention also was not limited to the western hemisphere. American troops were committed to an international army sent to restore order in China in 1900 and engaged in suppressing the Philippine Insurrection from 1898 to 1906. According to historian Phillip Knightley, no war occurred anywhere in the world during this era without a war correspondent being there to cover it.[20]

World War I was a war of attrition with destructive weapons causing mass casualties of a magnitude beyond the comprehension of mankind. It was total war, requiring the full commitment of national resources.[21] To maintain support for the war effort, the governments of the fighting nations believed they had to control wartime news. They imposed severe censorship on the press, and governments used propaganda for the first time in an organized, scientific manner to influence the public to support a war effort.[22]

The British general staff imposed censorship at the beginning of the war, and Colonel Sir Ernest Swinton was appointed to write reports on the allies' progress. Swinton's reports were written more to mislead the enemy, however, than to inform the public.[23]

War correspondents were denied access to British forces on the front lines and dispatches were heavily censored. These tactics kept the people in the dark about the failures of the British and French armies to halt the German advance. British correspondents allowed themselves to be used for propaganda purposes. Many correspondents identified themselves with the armies in the field and protected the high command from public scrutiny and criticism.[24]

By the time the United States entered the war, British authorities had ended the policy of complete exclusion of correspondents from the war front.[25] But the curtain of censorship that surrounded the British and French press engulfed the American journalists.[26]

The United States, like her allies, set up an apparatus to control and manipulate the news. A week after the declaration of war, President Woodrow Wilson appointed George Creel to head a Committee on Public Information. The primary job of the committee was to disseminate facts about the war and coordinate the government's propaganda efforts.[27]

General John J. Pershing, head of the American Expeditionary Forces, tried to restrict news coverage by limiting the number of journalists who could be accredited. This was not effective, so heavy censorship was imposed. At first, Pershing also tried to deny press access to the front lines. However, these restrictions were gradually lifted. Eventually, reporters were allowed to accompany American forces into battle. But censorship throughout the war did prevent many important stories unrelated to military security from being

reported.[28] For instance, the American Expeditionary Force was plagued with supply shortages. Motorcycles were ordered and tractors delivered in their place, trucks were shipped without motors, and critical equipment was left sitting on docks. The full extent of the supply scandal was not known until after the war.[29]

Even though the military imposed censorship, an adversarial relationship did not exist between the press and the military. This may be attributed in part to the character of the journalists. Many had covered smaller colonial wars and were knowledgeable of military affairs. The nature of the war demanded that adjustments had to be made to accommodate the media's right to know and the needs of national security. Accreditation and censorship were firmly established.[30]

When the United States entered World War II, censorship was imposed immediately. Only official communiques about the bombing of Pearl Harbor were released from the island for four days.[31] A few days after the declaration of war, President Roosevelt wrote, "All Americans abhor censorship, just as they abhor war. But the experience of this and of all other nations has demonstrated that some degree of censorship is essential in wartime, and we are at war.[32]

The U.S. Office of Censorship was created on December 19, 1941. The organization issued a Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press on January 15, 1942. The code called for voluntary censorship by news organizations and outlined what would be considered a breach of security.[33] Throughout the war, editors and reporters

voluntarily followed the code primarily because they believed it was in the best interests of the nation to do so.[34]

Although journalists cooperated with the Office of Censorship, they frequently criticized government and military organizations for unnecessarily withholding information. Stories suppressed by censors included the ill feeling between American and Australian soldiers, war crimes committed by Americans, and bombing campaigns in Germany.[35]

Only accredited journalists were allowed access to military operations, and all material had to be submitted to a military censor before it was dispatched.[36] Censorship and access to military operations were handled somewhat differently in the Pacific theater and the European theater. This difference can be attributed primarily to the personalities of the commanders.

Reporters covering the Pacific theater under General Douglas MacArthur "were not permitted to find fault with anything . . . above all, the theater's commander in chief."[37] MacArthur established a strict censorship policy, partly to ensure military security, but also to control his image as portrayed by journalists. His censors would allow the release of only favorable news about MacArthur. Those correspondents who portrayed MacArthur favorably were given exclusive interviews and tips on future operations.[38]

Reporters in the European theater were required to submit all of their copy to the military censor prior to dispatch, but generally had access to operations and the support of authorities. Planners for the invasion of Normandy went to great lengths to ensure that the news media took part in those operations. General Dwight Eisenhower viewed

an active press as an aid in the accomplishment of war aims. He told reporters before the invasion of Normandy that "as a matter of policy, accredited war correspondents should be accorded the greatest possible latitude in the gathering of legitimate news."[39]

News, however, was sometimes distorted and stories were withheld or heavily censored not because they contained military information of use to the enemy, but because they were embarrassing, covered up inept actions, or could be damaging to morale of the soldiers or the public. Correspondents were dependent on the military for resources and, in some cases, became actively involved in military affairs. Some critics said the public would have been better served had correspondents been more independent and less willing to abide by censorship policies. But many journalists felt that national security was at stake and that there was no alternative.[40]

Although journalists were rarely denied access to combat operations during World War II, they did not accompany military forces on every mission. For instance, no reporters were present at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge with the 101st Airborne Division, or during the Battle of Midway, or when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.[41] There were some conflicts between the media and the military, but relations were, for the most part, supportive and cooperative.[42]

In June 1950, when fighting broke out in Korea, the news agency men based in Seoul were the first to cover the action. Within days, other correspondents arrived, but just in time to join South Korean troops fleeing the Communist advance. When the first American troops

went into action, reporters witnessed a debacle. The hastily assembled post-World War II occupation troops, armed with inadequate weapons and provided with ammunition that had been stored since World War II, were no match for the well-trained and lavishly equipped North Korean People's Army. The South Korean forces and their American allies were driven back and retreated in panic. With no censorship, and operating with only a voluntary code of war reporting, reporters wrote completely and honestly about the situation. Marguerite Higgins quoted a lieutenant who asked:

> "Are you correspondents telling the people back home the truth? Are you telling them that out of one platoon of twenty men, we have three left? Are you telling them that we have nothing to fight with, and that it is an utterly useless war?"[43]

Reporters were harshly criticized by MacArthur's staff for disclosing information that gave aid and comfort to the enemy.[44] Two United Press reporters lost their accreditation for disclosing information that, they were told, adversely affected the morale of United Nations troops.

Correspondents insisted that their motives were completely patriotic and finally asked that censorship be imposed. They said that the competitive pressures were enormous and that the reporter who was least sensitive to security matters got the most published.[45]

MacArthur, however, refused to impose censorship. He said it was unworkable and told the newsmen that they could write what they wanted, but if they broke security or made unwarranted criticisms, they would be held personally responsible.[46]

After the Chinese Communist army entered the fight in October 1950 and United Nations forces were again pushed south, some correspondents criticized MacArthur's tactics. Correspondents began to question the war in general and whether South Korea was worth saving.[47] In addition, disclosure of security information became common place, not because correspondents were intentionally revealing information, but because the definition of security was a matter of perspective and correspondents could not always adequately judge for themselves what was a breach of security.[48] MacArthur finally placed correspondents under the jurisdiction of the army and imposed censorship regulations not only on military information, but also that information that would damage morale of U.S. forces or would embarrass the United States.[49]

Nearly 300 correspondents covered the Korean conflict, and, although the media were censored, journalists were not denied access to operations.[50] The Korean War brought new dimensions to the military/media conflict. Lack of public support created conflict and the media came under attack from many senior military officers because the military thought the media were distorting the news. Journalists asked what role they were supposed to play.[51]

In Vietnam, the military rejected censorship on practical grounds. It would have been difficult to require that all news stories go through censors, because there were no front lines and journalists moved freely throughout the country.[52]

Some restrictions, however, existed. In July 1965, the U.S. Mission in Saigon issued guidelines for correspondents. Reporters

could not report troop movements, identify units involved in battles, or report the number of casualties on a daily basis. They could report weekly casualty totals, but could not associate those figures with specific battles. The guidelines also emphasized that identification of wounded or dead should be avoided, out of respect for the feelings of the next of kin or the wounded man's right of privacy. There were only six violations of these ground rules significant enough to result in the lifting of a journalist's credentials during the entire Vietnam War.[53]

Access was seldom an issue. Journalists had almost unlimited access to military operations. The military accommodated the press and provided correspondents and photojournalists with transportation, rations and facilities.[54]

In a few instances, journalists were not allowed to accompany combat troops. In January 1971, correspondents were denied access to the Dewey Cannon II operation in order to protect troop safety and security. Members of the media did not accompany the helicopters that raided the Son Tay prisoner-of-war camp or accompany the ships that rescued the crew of the "Mayaguez." The bombings of Laos and Cambodia were kept secret, and the media never were allowed free access to Thailand.[55] These exclusions did not become a significant issue, however.

Despite the freedoms the media had during the Vietnam War, many historians, journalists, and military officers believe that the military/media relationship deteriorated dramatically during this era.[56] Several developments caused this deterioration.

During the Vietnam War, the media started to challenge their traditional relationships with the government.[57] This was the era of dissent throughout America, when the credibility of traditional American institutions was challenged by the nation's youth--an era of progressive movements, cultural revolution and intense social discord and change. The media were simply reflecting what was happening in the rest of American society.[58]

The military/media controversy had its roots in the contradictions of the policies pursued by Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon over Vietnam.[59]

The Kennedy administration, in efforts to minimize the American presence in Vietnam, misled Washington reporters. While the administration was announcing that American soldiers were only in an advisory role to the South Vietnamese army in the war against the Viet Cong, correspondents witnessed American forces taking part in combat missions. The American Military Advisory Group had to substantiate the Washington version of the war, but attempts to mislead newsmen about the extent of American involvement did not fool the correspondents; it only hurt the credibility of the military.[60]

The South Vietnamese government controlled news concerning military operations, and correspondents were accredited by the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem, the president of South Vietnam. Diem was hostile toward the American media and managed to have several reporters expelled despite appeals by the State Department that such action could undermine American public support for his country. His policies restricted the media and prohibiting access to military operations.

He attempted to expel any correspondent who offended a member of his family or wrote a negative story about South Vietnam.[61] American officials told Diem, "U.S. policy is firm in supporting the principle of free press and cannot overlook damage to it, no matter how irritating or unfounded press reports frequently are."[62] But negotiations did not resolve the conflicts between Diem and the correspondents, and two correspondents were expelled by the Diem regime.

Correspondents in Vietnam thought that Diem was inept and sought evidence to prove this. In January 1963 they witnessed the first major battle of the war. The South Vietnamese 7th Division, totaling 2,500 soldiers and consisting of two infantry battalions, an airborne battalion, a tank company, a ranger company, and fifty-one U.S. advisors, mounted an attack against a Viet Cong radio station at Ab Bac, in the northern Mekong Delta. Although the station was guarded by a Viet Cong force of only 400, the attack was a complete debacle for the numerically superior and well-equipped South Vietnamese division. Five U.S. helicopters were lost and three American advisors were killed trying to lead the reluctant South Vietnamese troops into the fight. One-hundred South Vietnamese soldiers were killed, several by friendly fire that had been misdirected. The enemy escaped, and the following day, during mopping-up operations, the South Vietnamese artillery again shelled their own troops, killing three and wounding twelve. To add insult to injury, American Brigadier General Robert York was forced to take

cover from the barrage "face down in the mud and dung of a rice paddy."[63]

American correspondents arrived after the battle and interviewed several angry American military advisors. Their stories appeared in American newspapers over the next several days, many of them critical of the conduct of the war in South Vietnam. The American mission, trying to reassure the South Vietnamese, called the battle a victory when it was obvious to everyone that it was not. This event, according to historian and journalist William M. Hammond, marked a divide in the history of U.S. government relations with the news media in South Vietnam:

> Before the battle newsmen criticized Diem, badgered American officials, and argued for more U.S. control of the war, but were still relatively agreeable. After it, correspondents became convinced that they were being lied to and withdrew."[64]

In efforts to win approval of American presence in Vietnam and justify escalation of the war, the Johnson and Nixon administrations misled correspondents in Washington and exerted pressure to change the character of the news that was coming from Vietnam. These contradictions in policies and rhetoric by White House officials led to a credibility gap that encompassed the military. In an effort to curb news stories that showed the administration in a bad light, White House officials insisted that military commanders and spokesmen promote and defend official political policy and counter negative news stories. Correspondents accused official spokesmen, both in Washington and Saigon, of obscuring, confusing, and distorting the news from Vietnam.[65]

Because Vietnam correspondents tried to portray the war as they saw it, the administration viewed the media as adversaries to the government. This perception was shared by the military. The Twentieth Century Fund Task Force reported that:

> No U.S. conflict since the Civil War was to stir so much hostility among the military toward the media as the drawn-out conflict in Vietnam. Indeed, some commentators (and generals) were retrospectively to conclude that the war was lost on American's television screens and in the newspapers, not on the battlefield.[66]

Some military officers firmly believe that television "lost" the Vietnam War by undermining public support of it. Phillip Knightley, in the book The First Casualty, describes one Marine officer's feelings--"My Marines are winning this war and you people are losing it for us in your papers."[67]

Commentator Robert Elegant said, "For the first time in modern history, the outcome of a world war was determined not on the battlefield, but . . . on the television screen."[68]

Many military officers were highly suspicious of the media.[69] General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. Commander in South Vietnam, criticized television coverage, saying that it provided a distorted view of the Vietnam War.[70] He considered the press his worst enemy. Westmoreland said:

> At one time in Vietnam we had 700 accredited reporters--all practicing, seeking and reporting news as they were accustomed to in the United States, all looking for the sensational stories. If we get involved again and we hope we won't, . . . and if the enemy controls the information on his side and we continue the practice of reporting only the offbeat, the unusual or the bizarre in any future war, well then the American public are going to be influenced as they were during Vietnam.[71]

During the Tet Offensive, Westmoreland said, "The enemy had attacked in force and he [the enemy] was going to be defeated. But the press was unbelieving. The character of the press reports was doom and gloom."[72]

Reporter Drew Middleton was flying in a helicopter with a colonel shortly after the Tet offensive. The colonel told him that the valley below had been completely pacified, but that, "your damned newspaper and the damned TV make it sound like a hotbed of Viet Cong guerrillas."[73]

One officer wrote, "The power and impact of television was the deciding factor in turning American public opinion from one of supporting the U.S. defense of South Vietnam to one of opposing it."[74]

According to Westmoreland, President Johnson was heavily influenced by press and television reports and would frequently receive the news reports before the official information.[75] When Walter Cronkite, in a personal report, called the war a stalemate and said negotiation was the only way out, Johnson supposedly turned to his press secretary and said, "If I've lost Walter I've lost Mr. Average Citizen."[76]

There is controversy concerning how much influence the media had in the American public's shift from supporting the Vietnam War to a position against the war.[77]

Journalist Harry Summers, a retired Army colonel, wrote that "the erosion of the American will . . . had little to do with television bringing the horrors of war into the living room. The difference (in

World War II and Vietnam) was rooted in the reasons war was being waged."[78]

Studies of the content of news stories and broadcasts concerning the Vietnam War indicate that the media favored the war initially. The American public's doubts about the war, however, increased dramatically after the Tet Offensive; this correlated with an increase in negative coverage of the war by major news networks and publications. According to Daniel C. Hallin, the media portrayed the Tet offensive as a defeat for South Vietnam and the United States when it was, in fact, a military victory. Hallin agrees that the war lost public support at an alarming rate after this episode. However, his findings indicate that there is no basis for the thesis that the media were the primary cause for this loss of support.[79]

Despite these findings, many senior military officers are skeptical of the media. Lieutenant Commander Arthur A. Humphries, a public affairs officer at the U.S. Naval War College, advocated controlling correspondents' access to the battlefield and imposing censorship. He said, "If you don't want to erode the public's confidence in the government's war aims, then you cannot allow that public's sons to be wounded or maimed right in front of them via their TV sets at home."[80]

There remains, long after the Vietnam War, resentment and suspicion of the media by military officials because of a perceived anti-military bias in the media. Many officers believe that the media are basically adversarial to the military. This perception evidently

influenced the government's decision to exclude the media during the 1983 Grenada invasion.[81]

CHAPTER THREE

EXCLUSION DURING THE GRENADA INVASION

Early on October 25, 1983, the United States committed its troops to a combat attack for the first time since the Vietnam War. Approximately 1,900 Marines and Army rangers assaulted the Caribbean island of Grenada as part of a multinational force that included, in addition to U.S. forces, approximately three-hundred soldiers from six Caribbean nations.[1] The news media had not been informed of the invasion. In fact, they had been misled to believe that no invasion was to take place.[2]

Although the media were not officially informed of the invasion, they were not caught completely unaware. The island had already established itself as a news story when pro-Marxist ruler Maurice Bishop was ousted by colleagues on October 12. Bishop had gained control of the island from the parliamentary government headed by Prime Minister Sir Eric Gairy in a bloodless coup in March 1979. Bishop's New Joint Endeavor for the Welfare, Education and Liberation (JEWEL) Movement established a pro-Marxist government with close ties to the Soviet Union and Cuba.[3] On October 12, Bishop was ousted by his colleagues and placed under house arrest. On October 19, Army troops massacred Bishop and several members of his cabinet, and General Hudson Austin took control of the island.[4]

The leftist military regime placed a 48-hour curfew on residents and closed Pearls airport, the only commercial airport on the island. Several journalists were expelled from the island, but a few remained.

Despite assurances from Grenada's newly established government that Americans residing on the island were in no danger, the Reagan administration voiced concern about the safety of the American medical students attending the St. George's University School of Medicine on Grenada. A Navy task force, initially en route to Lebanon, was diverted southward toward the island in what was described as a precautionary move.[5]

Other Eastern Caribbean leaders refused to recognize Austin and imposed a political and economic embargo on Grenada. Concerned about the instability of the island government, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States made a formal appeal to the Reagan administration to help restore order and democracy on the island and "stop the spread of Marxist revolution in the region."[6]

President Reagan was at Georgia's Augusta National Golf Club with Secretary of State George Shultz for the weekend when the plea from the Caribbean organization was received. To avoid speculation, President Reagan and Secretary Shultz continued to play golf, but remained in close contact with Vice President George Bush as he discussed the matter with members of the National Security Council. Sunday morning, however, Reagan received the tragic news of the bombing of American military quarters in Beirut and returned quickly to Washington. Members of the military were so reluctant to risk more

lives after the losses in Beirut that plans for any operation in Grenada were almost canceled. President Reagan decided, however, to go ahead with an invasion, not wanting to appear indecisive or nonsupportive of the Caribbean nations.

Initially, the operation was planned as a rescue mission, but was changed to a "rescue plus clear-and-hold operation" after the Eastern Caribbean leaders asked for U.S. assistance.[7]

The Reagan administration was so concerned with secrecy that it circumvented the requirement under the 1973 War Powers Resolution to consult with Congress before introducing U.S. forces into hostilities. Reagan reviewed military plans for the invasion with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, but key congressional leaders were not even informed of the decision to invade Grenada until after President Reagan gave the final order permitting U.S. forces to proceed.[8]

Apparently the administration felt that those officials routinely dealing with the press would be better off not knowing what was going on rather than knowing and having to lie. Larry Speakes, the principal White House spokesman, was not informed of the invasion until shortly after it began.[9] Neither Michael Burch, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, nor John Hughes, the senior spokesman at the State Department, were informed of the invasion plans until October 24, the day before the invasion.[10]

Despite the Reagan administration's efforts to keep the planned invasion secret, the newly established Grenadian regime, in a broadcast from the government-controlled radio station, declared that

the U.S. was using the safety of its citizens as an excuse to threaten an invasion of the island. The broadcast called for the people to repulse the invasion and to "protect the integrity and sovereignty of our homeland to the last man."[11]

During this time, both The New York Times and The Washington Post carried news stories concerning the possibility of an American military invasion of Grenada. The Washington Post carried a story headlined "Grenada Puts Military on Alert, Warns of U.S. Threat to Invade," but the article appeared on page four.[12]

Several journalists were in Bridgetown, Barbados, about 150 miles from Grenada, covering the political turmoil in Grenada. Western journalists had been expelled from Grenada by the new regime and Barbados was as close as they could get. All three major networks had a reporter and camera crew in Barbados and several major news publications had reporters deployed to the region.[13] Seven journalists, upon hearing that Pearls airport was closed, left Barbados on Monday, October 24, by chartered plane and boat to get to Grenada.[14]

Back in Washington, CBS reporter Bill Plante received an unsolicited phone call from a reliable source who told Plante that there would be an invasion of Grenada the following day (October 25). Plante asked Larry Speakes, who laughed. After Plante told Speakes that he had been told by a reliable source that the U.S. was going to invade the island, Speakes checked with Robert Sims, the national security council spokesman, who in turn checked with John Poindexter, the deputy national security adviser. Speaks was told that reports of

an invasion were "preposterous." He passed that on the Plante.[15] CBS correspondent Bob Schieffer was told the same thing by Sims.[16]

The following morning, President Reagan publicly announced that a joint multinational contingency composed of forces from six Caribbean democracies and the United States had invaded Grenada. The U.S. reportedly acceded to the request for assistance in order to protect innocent lives, to forestall further chaos, and to assist in the restoration of democracy to the island.[17]

The White House press corps, angry for being misled, confronted Larry Speakes, who admitted he may have misled reporters but defended the administration's need to maintain secrecy of the operation. However, a White House official described Speakes as "furious" because he was not informed about the invasion. Speakes reportedly sent a memo to White House chief of staff James A. Baker saying that "the credibility of the Reagan administration is at stake."[18]

White House press official Les Janka resigned over the affair. He complained that credibility of White House press officials had been compromised. There were rumors that Speakes had discussed resigning over the matter, but Speakes denied this.[19]

The press felt that Speakes should have been told about the invasion. Robert J. McCloskey wrote:

> Obviously things are bad when reporters know more about what's going on inside than authorized spokesmen. . . . The notion, which evidently runs in the upper reaches of the White House, that the press officer who doesn't know can't get you into trouble, was discredited long ago. The need-to-know should include the spokesman, and if the issue demands that his response

> to an informed inquiry be "I won't discuss that," let it be. It may cause momentary discomfort, but it does a lot for credibility.[20]

Many former White House spokesmen stated that Speakes should have been informed. Former Nixon spokesman Ron Ziegler said that the action was inexcusable and that the press will maintain a confidence when asked. "Larry should have known about the invasion. . . . The press secretary should know it all," he said.[21]

CBS correspondent Bill Moyers, a spokesman for President Johnson, admitted, "At times, circumstances make a liar out of you . . . Censorship is acceptable, lying is not."[22]

James Baker, White House chief of staff, said he was the one who made the decision not to inform Speakes or White House communications director David Gergen because early confirmation of the invasion could have endangered American lives.[23]

The secrecy surrounding the invasion created conflict within the White House and confrontations with the White House press corps, but the issue was overshadowed when journalists were denied access to Grenada.[24]

Media Fight to Cover Invasion

Journalists in Barbados immediately started trying to get to Grenada as soon as they heard of the invasion. The civilian airport in Grenada had been closed to civilian traffic by U.S. military officials and no civilian aircraft or boats were allowed within thirty miles of the island. Many reporters still attempted to get to Grenada by boat.[25] Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf, task force commander, told a

group of reporters that he ordered Naval patrol boats to shoot at unauthorized vessels. He said, "I know how to stop those press boats. We've been shooting at them. We haven't sunk any yet, but how are we to know who's on them?"[26] No civilian craft were sunk, but the Navy did intercept and turn back several journalists trying to reach Grenada by boat.[27]

The group of seven journalists who had hired a boat and left Barbados for Grenada landed on the island Tuesday morning, a few hours after U.S. forces had invaded the island. The group heard of the invasion from radio reports and were able to witness the initial fighting.

The telephone and telex facilities on the island had been knocked out during the first few hours of fighting, so the correspondents were unable to file their stories or even to notify their organizations as to their whereabouts.[28]

Four of the reporters--Edward Cody, Miami correspondent for The Washington Post, Don Bohning of The Miami Herald, Morris Thompson of Newsday, and British reporter Craig Chamberlain--made contact with U.S. forces and were evacuated from Grenada.[29] They were flown by helicopter to the USS Guam, where they had hoped to use American communications facilities to relay their stories. Instead of having access to shipboard communications, however, they were held incommunicado for eighteen hours. While on board the USS Guam, the reporters asked to use shipboard communications or to be transported back to Barbados to relay their stories to their newspapers. They were told that the task force's communications were too busy with

military traffic. Eventually the four reporters were taken back to Barbados.[30]

Within hours of Reagan's announcement of the invasion, more journalists began arriving on Barbados. Within a few days, almost 370 journalists were in Bridgetown trying to get information on the invasion.[31]

But there was no military information bureau in Bridgetown. The tarmac area at Grantley Adams Airport in Barbados was off-limits to reporters; the observation deck, which was apparently open to the public, was forbidden to photographers and video crews; there were no spokespeople available and the military people in the airport would not talk. Thomas E. Ricks of The Wall Street Journal said, "The military men here won't talk. The embassy here, such as it is, refers all questions to the State Department. There are no briefings, no press releases, no nothing."[32]

For the first few days of the invasion, all news releases came from Washington. Admiral Metcalf set up his command post on the USS Guam. He reported to the Commander in Chief Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT) in Norfolk, Virginia, summarizing information he received by radio from the dispersed units on the island and from supporting aircraft. Washington officials interpreted and reported this information to the press.[33]

Journalists in Barbados were unable to get confirmation on the material released in Washington. Some news reports came from diplomatic and intelligence sources, reports on the Grenadian radio station, or transmissions by ham radio operators on the island. The

majority came from official news releases out of Washington.[34] But many of these official news releases contained erroneous information concerning the scale and intensity of the fighting in Grenada. The intensity of the ground war was magnified in statements from Washington, yet a vigorous air war pitting U.S. aircraft against island anti-aircraft positions virtually went unreported. Edward Cody, a reporter for The Washington Post, was one of seven journalists who arrived on Grenada during the invasion and was able to view some of the fighting. He said, "The American invasion of Grenada looked different on the ground from how it was being portrayed from official reports here and in Washington."[35]

Although some of the misinformation put out by officials in Washington could be attributed to the confusion of battle, the press claimed that much of the misinformation was intentional and designed to show the administration and the invasion in a favorable light.

For instance, original reports inflated the number of Cuban soldiers on the island, which opponents of the invasion said was intentionally done to bolster Reagan's assertion that the invasion was necessary to prevent a Cuban military takeover of Grenada. Casualty figures for both civilian and military were confusing. For several days, the administration maintained that no civilians had been killed during the invasion. However, a Canadian reporter discovered that a mental hospital had been bombed the first day of the invasion, killing as many as forty-seven civilians. The Pentagon provided no American casualty figures for several days, and not until six days after the

invasion did officials release information about military mishaps, such as the the accidental bombing of an American position by Navy jets.[36]

Public affairs officers could have prepared for media coverage, had they been involved in the planning. But they were not. Details of the operation were left up to Admiral Metcalf, who accepted full responsibility for keeping reporters out of Grenada.[37]

The operations plan neglected press coverage altogether, even after the initial fighting. No arrangements were made to accommodate newsmen in either Grenada or Barbados.[38]

An eight man military audio-visual team arrived in Barbados on October 25 and went into Grenada the following day. Two six-man Navy video teams were in Grenada on October 25 and two Marine Corps camera crews went ashore near Pearls airport soon after the Marine rifle companies. The first published photographs and film footage came from these teams.

On October 26, Michael Burch, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, received permission from Defense Secretary Weinberger and General John W. Vessey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to start preparations to accommodate the growing numbers of newsmen on Barbados. Plans were then made to dispatch an interservice public affairs team.

The CINCLANT Joint Information Bureau (JIB), comprised of U.S. Navy Commander Ronald Wildermuth and five aides, was set up in a building at the Grantley Adams Airport in Barbados. But the bureau had no direct communication line to Admiral Metcalf or to the Army

command post that had been established at Point Salines, Grenada. To contact the task force command post on the USS Guam, the JIB officers had to telephone CINCLANT in Norfolk from the U.S. embassy in Bridgetown and ask the CINCLANT staff to pass messages to the USS Guam.

Commander Wildermuth requested several times that Admiral Metcalf's headquarters fly a briefing officer over from Grenada to update the press, but this never happened.[39] Some reporters said that the JIB was one of the least informed military offices they had ever encountered. Reporters, whose numbers were now almost 400, complained that information was often released in Washington many hours before shorter versions are offered by the JIB.[40]

On October 27, Admiral Metcalf gave permission for a press-television pool to go to the island. When one pool of twelve journalists, including the three major wire services and the four major television networks, arrived at Point Salines airstrip, no troops or transportation were available to get them around or to take them to the units in action. Captain Barry Willey, public affairs officer for the 82d Airborne Division, took the group on a preplanned guided tour of the prison compound established for Cuban soldiers and to some warehouses where captured weapons were, because the JIB thought that was what the journalists would be interested in seeing.[41] The journalists went to a Cuban billeting area and viewed some hostages, but were not allowed to talk with them. They did have an opportunity to interview American students, but the trip left many unanswered questions. They were interested in far more than could be

seen on a five-hour guided tour. For instance, was the invasion justified? Was it really a Cuban stronghold, as President Reagan had declared? Were the lives of the American students in jeopardy? These questions and others could not be answered on a guided tour.[42]

The JIB sent twenty-four journalists to Grenada on October 28 and forty-seven more the following day. All restrictions on press access were lifted on October 30, but by then the rangers had departed, and the marines were about to depart. On November 1, the JIB opened an office at the Grenada Beach Hotel and for the next four days more than one hundred journalists were shuttled daily from Barbados to Grenada.[43]

By November 2, the Pentagon reported that armed hostilities had ceased and American troop withdrawal would soon begin. The ruling military junta was dissolved and an advisory council was appointed to administer the island's affairs until a new government could be elected. On 15 December, the last of the U.S. combat forces departed the island.[44]

The military operation was over, but the war over media access to future combat operations had only begun.

Reasons for the Blackout

In a press conference held shortly after President Reagan announced the invasion, Washington reporters were told that journalists were banned from the island because of the necessity for secrecy and surprise and because there were concerns over correspondents' safety.[45] However, it was evident from statements by

administration and military officials that safety and secrecy were not the issues.

There is some confusion as to who actually made the decision to exclude the media from Grenada. Secretary of Defense Weinberger said the military commanders did not want journalists along. He said, "I wouldn't ever dream of overriding the commander's decision that he was not able to guarantee any kind of safety for anyone."[46]

Supposedly, General Vessey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made the decision not to take journalists in the invasion force. He reportedly told President Reagan that he was not taking the press with him on the invasion and the President and Secretary Weinberger both agreed.

Admiral Metcalf willingly took responsibility for the exclusion. Saying he was trying to protect reporters' lives by not granting them free access to the island, he told reporters that they should stop trying to take their complaints to a higher authority. "The buck stops with me," he said. "If you want to argue with somebody about it, you've got to argue with me, not the DOD (Department of Defense), not anybody else but me."[47]

Despite the willingness by military commanders and the Pentagon to take responsibility for excluding the media, many opponents of the exclusion felt that the Reagan administration played a large role in the decision. The commanders may have been the ones to suggest press exclusion from the operation, but the responsibility for the policy rests with the administration. In Congress, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, (D-Mass.) remarked:

> I assume that Secretary Weinberger wishes he had not offered the excuse that as a civilian, he would never dare overrule military commanders who want no press presence in a combat area. The Secretary's job is to make judgments about such a situation consistent with both military needs and the nature of the American constitutional system. . . . I am not willing to cede civilian authority on this issue. The administration's policy of censorship about events in Grenada is unprecedented, seemingly unjustified, and probably unconstitutional.[48]

Many observers felt that the action was consistent with other information control measures enacted by the Reagan administration. Floyd Abrams, a lawyer specializing in freedom of the press, told a House subcommittee, "I know of no other recent administration that has acted so consistently against the right of the public to obtain information."[49]

The New York Times said that Reagan barred the press from Grenada because he "was afraid the facts on the ground would not support the reasons he gave for the invasion. He was afraid that public support would wither if people learned too much too soon."[50]

An article in U.S. News and World Report said that the exclusion was "just the latest twist in a Reagan administration drive to tighten controls on government information."[51]

Another article, in Nieman Reports, said that the exclusion of reporters from Grenada was part of a pattern of the Reagan administration, "a methodical and relentless effort to close off the sources of public knowledge on basic questions of national policy."[52]

Sam Donaldson, on ABC's "Nightline", remarked, "I think there's a deliberate effort by this White House and the previous White House to mislead the press, not because of secrecy of a military operation but

because of a need they feel to protect the political hide of the President."[53]

Drew Middleton acknowledged that the military was not completely responsible for keeping the press out of Grenada. "Blame must be attached to the Reagan administration," he said, "which, though constitutionally in control of the military, abdicated that control when media accessibility came up for discussion before the operation began."[54]

Military authorities did not hesitate to say that they did not want the media in Grenada. This was, perhaps, the most plausible justification given by the military for the exclusion of the media. The issue was not one of secrecy for the operation or safety for journalists, but rather great mistrust and resentment of the press by the military.[55]

Admiral Metcalf said that having the media along would force the field commanders to think about public relations instead of military operations.[56] He told a group of reporters, "I'm here to take an island. I don't need you running around and getting in the way."[57]

Secretary of State Shultz said, "These days, in the adversary journalism that's been developed, it seems as though the reporters are always against us. And when you are trying to conduct a military operation, you don't need that."[58]

John E. Murray, a retired army major general, wrote in The Wall Street Journal that, "Engaging the press while engaging the enemy is taking on one adversary too many. It's easier to straighten out an

erratic military maneuver than straightening out the misconceptions of the media."[59]

A marine officer participating in the Sidle panel hearings after the invasion said, "There is down to earth disapproval [by the media] not only of what we do and the way we do it, but of us in general."[60]

This perception of anti-military bias of the media by high-ranking officials and military officers led to the Pentagon's decision to exclude the press from Grenada.[61] The military felt that the media, especially television, would adopt an automatic bias against the operation.[62]

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESS FREEDOM VS. NATIONAL SECURITY

Every major news organization protested that the government misled the media about the invasion and then prevented media coverage of the operation by prohibiting access, hampering eyewitness reports, and, in one instance, evacuating four journalists off of the island and holding them incommunicado aboard the USS Guam for several hours.[1]

Journalists disputed the arguments cited by the military for media exclusion.

Concerning the issue of safety, journalists said they knew that the government bore no responsibility for their safety, and the government knew this, too. They cited the 53 reporters who died in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War and those who died covering World War II as examples of journalists who gave their lives in war.[2] "Danger is part of a war correspondent's job," wrote Drew Middleton.[3]

A statement by the American Newspaper Publishers Association said:

> Safety is insufficient reason to prevent correspondents from covering an important military operation. There have been many U.S. war correspondents who . . . risked and gave their lives accompanying American forces so that the American people might know what their armed forces were doing--and not doing.[4]

In response to the secrecy issue, proponents for the media wondered how secret the operation really was, since Radio Grenada had

been announcing for two days that the island was about to be invaded by the United States. At a news conference on October 26, Larry Speakes was confronted by angry Washington reporters about his response of "preposterous" to earlier queries about a possible invasion of Grenada. The reporters said they were among the few who didn't know about the invasion.[5]

Even had the invasion been a complete surprise, opponents of the exclusion were convinced that arrangements could have been worked out to maintain security and still allow the media access to the operation.

In the past, to protect security of military operations, the media agreed to a limited number of journalists accompanying troops, voluntary reporting restraints, limited censorship, and delays in filing dispatches.[6] Jerry Friedheim, of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, said:

> In the sweep of American military history, professional newspeople, government officials and military officers have found ways to protect the security of a military operation and the safety of uniformed men and women, without tight controls or news blockades, largely by relying on voluntary restraints.[7]

An editorial in The Washington Post said, "The military had valid considerations of surprise, the security of vital information. . . . The press knows, however--as do plenty of experienced Pentagon hands--that these are all things that can be worked out."[8]

Senator Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., told his colleagues in Congress that this excuse did not make sense. "There is a long and honored tradition of journalists pledging secrecy and keeping that

pledge during the opening phase of a sensitive military operation," he said.[9]

Opponents of the exclusion cited numerous examples of the media's ability to maintain secrecy, particularly when national security was involved. Preparations for the Bay of Pigs invasion, which occurred in April 1961, were uncovered by the Miami Herald in August 1960. A reporter for the newspaper discovered the CIA camp set up to train Cuban exiles for the invasion; but once the Herald investigated the matter and realized the national security implications, it withheld the story. In the ensuing months, the correspondents for the national wire services and several major news magazines and newspapers came upon information concerning the pending invasion. Reporter Howard Handleman, who worked for U.S. News & World Report, said he had the whole story before the invasion, but didn't feel privileged to tell any of it because of national security implications.[10] Most other reporters and news organizations voluntarily held the information, too.[11]

During the Cuban missile crisis, later that same year, news organizations again cooperated by withholding information that, had it been published, could have escalated the confrontation into war.[12]

Confidential briefings were given to journalists when President Johnson sent the Marines to Santo Domingo in 1965, and no information was released prematurely.[13] During the Vietnam War, only six out of more than 2,000 journalists lost their accreditation because of security violations.[14] General Creighton Abrams even lent his

personal aircraft to reporters during the Cambodian invasion in 1970, trusting them not to violate security requirements.[15]

More recently, the media's sensitivity to national concerns was exhibited when American Embassy personnel were taken hostage in Teheran, Iran in 1979. Several journalists knew that some Americans had taken refuge in the Canadian Embassy; they withheld this information because to disclose it would clearly have endangered those Americans. When the TWA airliner was hijacked in Beirut, The New York Times deliberately kept the identity of those passengers who were military personnel out of the paper.[16]

The media have clearly cooperated in the past when dealing with national security or when there was a clear and present danger for citizens. Given these facts, the case for exclusion based on the need for secrecy seemed just as shallow an excuse as a concern for the safety of journalists.

Opponents of the exclusion concluded that the media were kept out of Grenada not because of safety or secrecy, but because the military simply did not want them on hand to provide an independent account of the fighting.[17]

Although most news organizations protested the exclusion, there was not total consensus by the media concerning the issue. Some correspondents sided with the military.

James G. Minter of the Atlanta Journal and Constitution suggested, "Rather than mounting a constitutional soapbox, the press might better spend its time contemplating why it was not informed and invited."[18]

Richard M. Clurman of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, wrote that members of the media demand access to government and to other institutions and interests, but resist being as open to inquiry about themselves.[19]

Columnist Patrick J. Buchanan said, "If senior U.S. commanders running this operation harbor a deep distrust of the American press, theirs is not an unwarranted contempt."[20]

But for the most part, the media were convinced that they should have accompanied the invasion force and been allowed access to the battle. They justified their claim based on historical precedence and on freedom of the press as guaranteed in the First Amendment.

A statement of principle prepared by a special committee of senior representatives of media organizations said, in part:

> Since the Revolutionary War, American journalists traditionally have been allowed to accompany American troops on military operations, even when those actions depended upon the element of surprise. Such access has furthered the vital interest of the public in having independent accounts of the actions of our uniformed men and women in combat, beyond those reports issued by government officials.[21]

Concerning freedom of the press, the media argued that the exclusion was a violation of the "most fundamental principles of the First Amendment."[22] The media said that the public has a guaranteed right, based on the First Amendment, to be informed of the actions of the government by free and independent news organizations.[23]

Howard Simons, managing editor of The Washington Post, said, "I think a secret war, like secret government, is antithetical to an open society. It's absolutely outrageous."[24]

The managing editor of The New York Times said, "We have strenuously protested to the White House and the Defense Department about the lack of access. . . . The American people require all the facts to make judgments about the actions of our Government."[25]

Edward M. Joyce, president of CBS, said that the restriction was intolerable and "not what a free society is all about."[26]

The Washington Journalism Review described the exclusion as a "stunning and unprecedented act of censorship . . . struck at the core of our traditional freedom to know." The article went on to say, "A free and mobile press with access to events is a major guarantee of a democratic society and a major protector of our diverse sources of information."[27]

News organizations took their protests to Capitol Hill, where the Senate took action to end all restrictions on the press. A lengthy debate raged over the proposed resolution, which read:

> Since a free press is an essential feature of our democratic system of government and since currently in Lebanon, and traditionally in the past, the United State has allowed the press to cover conflicts involving United States armed forces, restrictions imposed upon the press in Grenada shall cease. For the purpose of this section, "restrictions" shall include:
>
> (1) preventing the press from freely accessing news sources of its choice:
>
> (2) unreasonably limiting the number or representation of the press permitted to enter Grenada; and
>
> (3) unreasonably limiting freedom of unsupervised movement of the press in Grenada.[28]

No action was taken because the resolution came in the form of an amendment attached to the debt ceiling bill which was shelved by the Senate.[29]

Senator Kennedy expressed the arguments supporting the press in the Senate. "It is ironic," he said, "that during a military intervention supposedly undertaken in the name of restoring freedom to a foreign country, the administration has chosen to restrict freedom in our own country."[30]

Media figures testifying before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties, and the Administration of Justice on November 2, 1983, criticized the administration's curbs on press freedom and called for re-establishing the principle of press freedom and access to allow the media to observe and report as a critic of the government.[31]

Eight congressmen even introduced a resolution of impeachment, alleging that President Reagan was guilty of "impairing the first amendment rights of those seeking to provide news coverage and of the American public in general."[32]

Hustler publisher Larry Flynt filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, asking for an injunction against the administration for preventing reporters from his publication from going to Grenada. The case was dismissed with prejudice on the grounds of mootness. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia affirmed the dismissal, but vacated the opinion, remanding the case to the district court with instructions to dismiss the case as moot without prejudice or any opinion on the merits of the claim.[33]

Jack Landau, executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, consulted with an ad hoc committee of press organizations over the possibility of bringing suit against the Reagan

administration to establish a legal foundation for access to military operations. Landau said, "We are thinking of bringing suit as to whether there is a First Amendment right under the Constitution to be present and observe front line combat under the traditional restrictions that have been worked out since World War II."[34] He said that the exclusion was in clear violation of the most fundamental principles of the First Amendment and that "the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the press, in order to inform the public, has a First Amendment right of access to those places which 'historically' and 'traditionally' it has had the right to cover."[35]

The committee retained a Washington attorney to consider legal principles on which a lawsuit might be based. These principles included denial of equal protection, prior restraint, dissemination of false and misleading information, and violation of the right of access to government operations.

The committee said that the administration denied the media equal protection when they allowed members of the foreign press, military reporters and camera crews, and American civilians to roam freely on Grenada while denying access to the American media.

In addition, the media group said military officials exercised prior restraint when they held the four reporters incommunicado on the USS Guam for several hours.

Government officials also violated the law when they disseminated false and misleading information, according to the committee. For instance, the media charged officials with deceiving them by releasing inaccurate strength figures of Cuban combatants and

withholding information about civilian casualties when the mental hospital was bombed.

The strongest case the media committee found for bringing suit against the administration was the administration's violation of the First Amendment by denying the media access to the island. According to the committee, the Supreme Court has determined that the media have a guaranteed right of access to report significant government actions.[36]

The group decided not to resort to legal action after consulting with lawyers.[37] Most of the media's lawyers did not want the First Amendment issue raised in a court action for fear that some rights would be lost should the court not decide in their favor.[38]

The First Amendment and Freedom of the Press

"Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of the press."[39]

According to Chief Justice Warren E. Burger this portion of the Constitution is one of its most important parts.[40]

It is unclear why the framers of the Constitution inserted the words "of the press" in the First Amendment. One explanation is that freedom of speech protects oral communication and freedom of the press written communication. Another explanation is that in colonial times, dissemination of information had often been the object of official restraint.

Some scholars theorize that the framers of the Constitution believed that freedom of speech is a God-given right, not one granted

by the Constitution, so the freedom of speech clause was intended to protect a right the people already have. Such freedom lies at the heart of a democracy; therefore it must be protected. The words "of the press" recognize the press as an institution. Thus, "freedom of the press" was not to be confused with each individual's "freedom of speech" and this distinction was consciously written into the Constitution.[41]

Justice Potter Stewart wrote:

> That the First Amendment speaks separately of freedom of speech and freedom of the press is no constitutional accident, but an acknowledgment of the critical role played by the press in American society.[42]

According to Justice Stewart, the purpose of the press clause was to create "a fourth institution outside the Government as an additional check on the three official branches [of government]."[43]

Many First Amendment scholars argue that freedom of the press has traditionally held a preferred position, a position deeply rooted in the political and legal history of the United States. The media are entitled to First Amendment rights as part of the public, and they are also entitled to rights in their special capacity as information gathering and disseminating organizations for the public.[44]

The Supreme Court has recognized the institutional value of the press. It has declared that the public must have a reliable, disinterested source of news in order to be informed and to maintain effective control over the government and its actions. The Supreme Court acknowledged a surrogate relationship of the media to the general public in Cox Broadcasting Corp. v. Cohn. The Court said:

> In a society in which each individual has but limited time and resources with which to observe at first hand the operation of his government, he relies necessarily upon the press (and media) to bring to him in convenient form the facts of these operations.[45]

Congress and the courts have never addressed the issue of whether the First Amendment guarantees the press direct access to military combat operations.

However, in the Pentagon papers case, the Court determined that an independent press that can serve as an objective source for war news serves a vital function by informing the public about the nation's conduct in war.[46]

Justice Hugo Black observed that the Founding Fathers gave the press protection so that it could serve the governed, not the governors. The government's power to censor was abolished so that the press would remain free to expose deception and bare the secrets of government. He said:

> Paramount among the responsibilities of a free press is the duty to prevent any part of government from deceiving the people and sending them off to distant lands to die of foreign fevers, and foreign shot and shell.[47]

Given the above interpretations of the First Amendment, one can reason that the press do have an institutional value separate from their value as a forum for free expression. Based on constitutional interpretations by the Supreme Court regarding press access to criminal trials, a case can be made that the media do have a constitutional right of access to the battlefield. However, the Court must weigh all the factors, and frequently two sections of the Constitution conflict with one another. In the case of access to a

military combat operation, the freedom of the press would have to be weighed against the possible threat to national security.

National Security Issues

The government has a strong interest in keeping some information secret during a war. This interest clashes with the American public's need to know about the activities of the government. Although the First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press, it was not intended to make it impossible for the President to protect the security of the United States.[48]

Article 2, Section 2, of the Constitution grants the president the power to make decisions that affect foreign and military policy. This power can include restricting media access to the battlefield.[49]

The military is not a democratic organization and does not operate based on democratic principles. In the interest of national security, limitations of public access to military operations or activities may be imposed.[50] Furthermore, disclosure of classified information is prohibited by law.[51] There is the necessity for the government to exclude certain information from public scrutiny. In time of war, such exclusion may include tactics and techniques used in past operations that would reveal information that could affect the success of a current mission. Since revealing such information could have a direct impact on the lives of those soldiers fighting, it is legitimately classified.[52]

Disclosure of classified factual information, such as data relating to technical matters, troop movements, or unit size and

disposition, is seldom an issue. Obviously, disclosure of such facts could give the enemy an advantage and risk the security of an operation. Rarely have the media intentionally released material of this nature. The media are generally cooperative concerning sensitive diplomatic information as well.[53]

However, material is not always classified to protect a true secret. It is also classified because of its political significance. It is sometimes classified to cover up mistakes or an abuse of power, to avoid an embarrassment, or to stifle criticism. Sometimes information in the public domain is classified because the initiators of the classification do not know it is public knowledge.[54]

When disclosure of this type of information becomes an issue, the problem becomes one of how to determine what is sensitive information whose release could endanger national security and what is information whose disclosure would only be politically embarrassing. Complicating the determination is the problem that it is usually the government who must make the judgment.[55]

Rarely does the Supreme Court override classification of a document. However, the Justices recognize the shortfalls of the system. Justice William O. Douglas wrote in the Pentagon papers case, "Secrecy in government is fundamentally anti-democratic, perpetuating bureaucratic errors."[56]

So the question may well be, "What constitutes security?" It is not surprising that the answer to this question is viewed differently by those in charge of national security and those concerned with a free press.

Some members of the media declare that it is their duty to learn the secrets of the government and determine whether they should be revealed to the public. When asked who and what gives the media this right, they invoke the First Amendment and the people's right to know.[57]

It is not difficult for the media to learn secrets; in fact, journalist Howard Simons said that if you work as a journalist in Washington, it is "impossible to do your daily job without bumping into a secret."[58] He went on to say that reporters and editors do not invent secrets, but are told secrets by someone who can benefit from public disclosure of the information. Most security leaks, according to Simons, are deliberate, are done by government officials, and support the administration's position. These deliberate leaks often deceive the media and manipulate the news.[59]

Simons said:

> That seems to me all the more reason why it behooves larger newspapers to be tough on secrecy. . . . Sometimes newspapers are wrong in publishing a story after being asked not to, but then, too, sometimes they are wrong in withholding stories."[60]

Although Congress has enacted several laws which provide for prosecution of individuals who publish classified information, the statutes are limited in scope and require that the government prove the person acted with the intent to injure the United States or to confer an advantage on a foreign country.[61]

Judge Murray Gurfein expressed his view of the matter in the Pentagon Papers case. He wrote:

> Security also lies in the value of our free institutions. A cantankerous press, an obstinate press, a ubiquitous press, must be suffered by those in authority in order to preserve the ever greater values of freedom of expression and the right of the people to know."[62]

The media claim that they want to meet the public's need to know while minimizing danger to national security. Katherine Graham, in a speech at the Guildhall in London in 1985, said:

> When the media obtain especially sensitive information, we are willing to tell the authorities what we have learned and what we plan to report. And while reserving the right to make the final decision ourselves, we are anxious to listen to arguments about why information should not be aired. (The media) want to do nothing that would endanger human life or national security. We are willing to cooperate with the authorities in withholding information that could have those consequences.[63]

The Supreme Court, National Security and the Media

To protect national security, Congress passed the Espionage Act of 1917, which restricted the dissemination of information in connection with national security. The constitutionality of this law was challenged during World War I in the case Schenck v. United States. In adjudicating the conflict between countervailing sections of the Constitution, the Court debated just how much latitude should be given the media. It determined that, in time of war, freedom of speech and of the press would not have the same protection they enjoyed during peacetime. In the same case, however, Justices Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis D. Brandeis fashioned the "clear and present danger" test. Justice Holmes, delivering the opinion of the Court, said:

> We admit that in many places and in ordinary times the defendants in saying all that was said in the circular would have been within their constitutional rights. But the character of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done. The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theatre and causing a panic. . . . The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent. . . . When a nation is at war many things that might be said in time of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight and that no Court could regard them as protected by any constitutional right.[64]

The constitutionality of the Espionage Act was upheld. However, the "clear and present danger" test defined and restricted government control over freedom of speech and of the press.

The possibility of prior restraint of information on matters concerning military security was first suggested in Near v. Minnesota when the Court recognized, in dictum, possible justification for the government to withhold information. Chief Justice Holmes said that "no one would question but that a government might prevent actual obstruction to its recruiting service or the publication of sailing dates of transports or the number and location of troops."[65] This decision acknowledged the government's right to censorship for national security.

The Court did not confront the constitutionality of prior restraint for reasons of national security until 1971 in the Pentagon Papers case, when the government sought injunctions against The New York Times and The Washington Post to halt publication of a Defense Department study of the Vietnam War. In New York Times v. United

States, the government contended that publication of the study would present a "grave and immediate danger to the security the United States."[66] The Court did allow that prior restraint could be justified under some circumstances, but held that, in this particular case, an injunction would be an unconstitutional prior restraint. The Court said, "Any system of prior restraints of expression comes to this Court bearing a heavy presumption against its constitutional validity."[67]

The Constitutional Basis for Media Access

Since 1925, when the Supreme Court expanded the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to include the rights of the First Amendment, the press has received increasingly broader protection under the First Amendment to disseminate information.[68]

However, it was not until 1972 that the court recognized the need to protect information gathering. In Branzburg v. Hayes, The Court determined that the First Amendment does not guarantee the media a special right of access not afforded the general public. But the justices were so divided that most courts now read the decision as creating a limited First Amendment privilege. Justice Byron R. White, who wrote the opinion of the Court, made the concession that there had to be some protection for gathering news or the freedom of the press could be eviscerated.[69]

The companion cases Pell v. Procunier and Saxbe v. Washington Post Company questioned direct access denials by the government. The Court acknowledged that, under certain circumstances, media access

could warrant First Amendment protection, but not in the claims the press presented for these cases.[70]

The Court first applied constitutional protection to press access in Richmond Newspapers, Inc. v. Virginia. The case involved a man charged with murder. The defendant's lawyer asked that the court be closed to the public because he claimed that a member of the victim's family seemed to be coaching the witnesses. The judge ordered the trial be carried out behind closed doors. Richmond Newspapers appealed the closure to the state supreme court. The appeal was rejected, so the newspaper took its case to the U.S. Supreme Court.[71]

The Supreme Court ruled that the judge had violated the rights of the public and the press to attend criminal trials. The opinion stated that the public's right of access to a courtroom is based on the public's need to know about the actions of its government.

The leading opinion was written by Chief Justice Warren Burger. To determine whether the First Amendment guarantees the press access to criminal trials, he established that the courtroom was traditionally available to the press and the public and that there is an institutional value to the presence of the media and the public in criminal courts. He wrote that public and media access to the courtroom guarantees justice and serves significant political interests, and the press serves as surrogates to the public in this respect. Justice Burger recognized that an implicit First Amendment right of access to trials is necessary to give meaning to the amendment's explicit guarantees; therefore press and public access to

the courtroom warrants First Amendment protection. Justice Stevens concurred and said that this was a "watershed" case for the protection of the "acquisition of newsworthy matter."[72]

In Globe Newspaper Co. v. Superior Court, the Court reaffirmed the right of the press and the public to attend criminal trials when it held that a Massachusetts law closing courtrooms during the testimony of a victim under eighteen years of age violated the First Amendment.[73]

The Court stated that the tradition of access was important because it "implies the favorable judgment of experiences."[74] When the Court studied the institutional value of the media, it observed that media access would assure that the trial process is fair and of good quality. It stated that access to the criminal courtroom permits the public to participate in and serve as a check upon the judicial process, thus allowing each citizen to participate in and contribute to the republican system of government. In Globe Newspapers, the Court suggested that media access may apply anywhere the public has a strong concern with government action.[75]

Media Access or Access Denial

To date, the Court has not recognized a right of press access to any government function other than the criminal court proceeding. However, the Court's recognition and protection of First Amendment rights for the media concerning access to criminal courtrooms could be used to justify access to combat operations. The argument is based on the concept that the American people have a fundamental right to know

about the activities of their government so that they can make informed decisions about government activities. Since war has an impact on almost every citizen, information about the government's conduct in war cannot be any less vital to the process of democracy than information about events in a criminal courtroom.[76]

Media organizations are reluctant to pursue the issue through the courts. They reason that if the court does not rule in the media's favor, the decision could set a harmful precedent in future cases concerning access to government activities.[77]

CHAPTER FIVE

IN THE AFTERMATH OF GRENADA

When the last U.S. combat troops pulled out of Grenada, only a few correspondents were on hand to observe. The war was over and the island was settling back into business as usual.[1] But the battle that arose over the issue of media access to the operation was still being waged on Capitol Hill, in the Pentagon, and in news organizations across the country.

In response to the protests, the Reagan administration termed American combat abroad as a "private" government event and said that the administration could exclude the American media for as long as it felt necessary in any future combat operations.[2]

No action was taken on the congressional resolution introduced to end all restrictions in Grenada, because the resolution came in the form of an amendment attached to the debt ceiling bill, which was shelved by the Senate.[3] A later resolution was not introduced because the exclusion became a moot issue once the military opened up the island to reporters.

However, both the Pentagon and the media found cause for concern with the condition of the military/media relationship. The media wanted a return to the traditional relationship that existed in past wars and conflicts. The military recognized that something had

to be worked out to protect the interests of both the media and the military for future combat operations.

The ad hoc committee that had considered bringing suit against the Reagan administration consisted of representatives from the American Society of Newspaper Editors, American Newspaper Publishers Association, Sigma Delta Chi, Associated Press Managing Editors, and Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. The committee embarked on a campaign to restore traditional media-military relationships.

The group sought a meeting with President Reagan to express concern over media exclusion during Grenada. Unable to get a response from the President, the news committee issued a "Statement of Principle on Press Access to Military Operations," which was published in the nation's newspapers on January 11, 1984.[4] The first paragraph stated, in part:

> The highest civilian and military officers of the government should reaffirm the historic principle that American journalists . . . should be present at U.S. military operations. And the news media should reaffirm their recognition of the importance of U.S. military mission security and troop safety . . . Both groups can agree on coverage conditions which satisfy safety and security imperatives while, in keeping with the spirit of the First Amendment, permitting independent reporting to the citizens of our free and open society to whom our government is ultimately accountable.[5]

Shortly thereafter the committee met with administration officials to try to develop guidelines for future media coverage of military conflicts. No decisions were made, but many of the committee members believed that some misunderstandings were resolved.[6]

In the meantime, military officials also were trying to resolve the conflict. On December 1, 1983, Secretary of Defense

Caspar Weinberger released his "Principle of Information" policy. It stated:

> It is the policy of the Department of Defense to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, Congress, and members representing the press, radio and television may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy.[7]

General Vessey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, appointed retired Army Major General Winant Sidle to head a panel to make recommendations on how to conduct military operations in a manner that safeguards the military and protects the security of the operation while allowing the media to keep the American public informed. In a letter to news organizations, General Vessey said that he hoped the recommendations of the panel would be "at least the first step in establishing some general guidelines" for coverage of military operations.[8] Sidle, corporate spokesman for Martin Marietta, served in key public affairs positions during the Vietnam War, including chief of information for the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam.[9]

Some members of the media viewed the formation of the Sidle panel as an indication that the Pentagon was changing its views on the situation. Members of the ad hoc media group believed that the resolution of the problem rested with the Sidle panel and that the panel was a way they could get assurances of access to future military operations.[10]

The fourteen-member Sidle Commission consisted of retired members of the media, educators in the field of journalism, military public affairs officers from the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and from each of the services, and spokesmen from

the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Representatives from such media organizations as the American Newspaper Publishers Association and National Association of Broadcasters were asked to sit on the panel. They declined, however, because they believed that it would not be appropriate for them to be members of a government panel. Robert L. Burke, vice president of industry and public affairs of ANPA, said, "They don't want to be part of the government decision-making process, but they will talk to the committee."[11]

In preparation for the hearings, General Vessey sent news media organizations and professional journalists a letter querying their concerns. The letter included nine questions to be used by the commission. Formulated by General Sidle, the questionnaire asked media organizations their views on censorship, the First Amendment, the use of press pools to cover military operations, accreditation of reporters for media pools, and logistical needs of the different media.[12]

The panel convened in February and hearings were held February 6 through 10 in Washington, D.C. At the beginning of the panel session, General Sidle announced that the panel had agreed that "the media should cover military operations to the fullest extent possible, consistent with mission security and troop safety."[13] The question that remained was how that was to be done.

Nineteen media representatives testified before the committee, most of them simply asking for a return to the procedures followed by the military before Grenada.[14] The military officers on the panel were looking for ways to develop more formal procedures for media

coverage of combat operations, while the media indicated they were wary of firm doctrine, which might not be flexible enough to adjust to a specific situation when the time came.[14]

It was apparent, however, that the real issue was mutual trust. The media were concerned that officials would review their material not only for security considerations, but also political considerations. Media representatives tried to reassure the military that the press could be trusted. Jerry Friedheim said that the press had "reaffirmed" its "commitment to mission security and troop safety." He asked that the Sidle panel "lead the government toward reaffirmation of the principle that preparations for media access be included in the earliest stages for planning a military action."[15]

Military representatives expressed concern for security, the problems posed when large numbers of correspondents want access to a combat operation, and the impact of communication technology on security.[16] Most of the questions regarding censorship had to do with videos and photographs.[17] Some officers were suspicious of the media. To the chagrin of media representatives, the military questioned the media's ethics and patriotism.[18] Major General Llyle J. Barker, Jr., Army public affairs officer, said he thought that one in fifteen members of a pool would break a news embargo. He also was critical of some of the reporters who cover defense matters. He said, "There are as many pros as before, but more people [in the press corps] are not up to the same standards."[19]

In the end, both groups agreed that trust and understanding between the two institutions were essential. One military participant

said the dialogue provided an understanding between the two groups,[20] and Jerry Friedheim suggested that public affairs officers establish good relations with senior managers of the press to rebuild trust.[21] Jonathan Friendly wrote in Washington Journalism Review, "The exercise may have eased some of the anti-press passions that have simmered in some Pentagon breasts since Vietnam just by bringing the hostility out in the open."[22]

Following the panel discussion, members of the Sidle commission drew up a report recommending a course of action. The report was reviewed by chief Pentagon spokesman Michael Burch and Secretary of Defense Weinberger before its release on August 23, 1984.[23] The report listed eight recommendations delineating what the armed forces need to do to provide for adequate news coverage of military events. This report is now the basis for the current procedures employed by the Department of Defense to ensure media coverage of military operations.

The first recommendation called for conducting public affairs planning concurrently with operational planning for military operations.

Recommendations two and three recommended the use of media pooling when full media coverage is not feasible. Media representatives that appeared before the Sidle panel were against the pooling arrangements in general, but they agreed that such arrangements could be necessary for them to obtain early access to an event. This sort of arrangement would be used only when the number of media personnel allowed on an operation were limited because of

security or logistics. The panel suggested that an accreditation or notification list of correspondents be maintained to expedite notification of journalists.

Recommendation four suggested that the military establish and issue security guidelines and ground rules governing media access to military events. Voluntary compliance by media representatives would be necessary, with violation resulting in exclusion for the rest of the operation.

The next three recommendations dealt with logistics support. They emphasized the need to plan for sufficient equipment, transportation, and communications assets to provide for the media.

The final recommendation dealt with improving the relationship between the two institutions. It called for developing a program to arrange for meetings with news organizations and military officials on a regular basis to discuss mutual problems. In addition, it recommended increased public affairs instruction in military schools and colleges. Finally, it recommended that the Secretary of Defense host a working meeting with broadcast news media representatives to discuss unique issues concerning audio-visual coverage of the battlefield.[24]

In response to the first recommendation, the Joint Operations Planning System was amended to require that all military theater war plans have provisions to accommodate the media. Recommendations two through six were adopted in the formulation of the Department of Defense National Media Pool, which was organized in 1985. In response to the final recommendation, the Department of Defense formulated in

August 1984 a Secretary of Defense Media Advisory Committee which meets regularly.[25] In addition, military and media professionals now meet on a regular basis in the war colleges and mid-career military service schools.[26]

Initially, both the military and the media were apprehensive about a media pool. But it has proven to be the most effective method devised at this time to ensure media access to military operations. The procedures for organizing and activating the DOD National Media Pool incorporate six of the eight Sidle panel recommendations. The pool is designed to provide access for the media and to accommodate their needs, while ensuring security for the military.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NATIONAL MEDIA POOL

The number of media personnel that accompany military forces sometimes must be limited because of operational security considerations. The Department of Defense National Media Pool was formulated to establish procedures that would allow media access to a military event while maintaining operational security.[1]

Under the DOD guidelines, a small group of designated correspondents representing United States media organizations are called on to accompany military forces during contingency operations. Because it is often essential to maintain secrecy when military forces are deployed, pool members agree in advance not to notify anyone that the pool has been alerted for an exercise or contingency operation. While on the operation, participants share their copy, audio-video, and photographs with other members of the media pool. Pool products are reviewed for security considerations, transmitted to Washington, and released for publication to any interested United States or foreign media organization on an equitable, no-fee basis.[2] This procedure assures fair distribution of material to news organizations, serves the American public by providing independent news accounts of the military activity, and allows operational security to be maintained while allowing media access to the event.

The national media pool includes the three major wire services used by newspapers in the United States, which are the AP, UPI, and Reuters; the four major United States television networks, which are CBS, ABC, NBC and CNN; and the three major national news magazines, which include Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report; several radio organizations; and a large number of daily newspapers. An activated media pool, which usually consists of eleven or twelve members, has a correspondent or photographer from each of the three wire services, a news magazine reporter, a radio correspondent, reporters from three newspapers, and a television correspondent with a two-person technical crew. Two of the three wire services are included in every pool; the representatives for the other types of media rotate each quarter. Participating organizations are selected by the media. The Washington bureau chiefs for the wire services meet to decide which two will be in the pool for each quarter. News magazines and television networks are decided in the same manner. The American Newspaper Publishers Association designates which newspapers will be represented in the pool for a specific quarter. When the media pool was organized, the association provided the Department of Defense public affairs office with the list of newspapers that belong to the pool. Newspapers rotate through in the order they appear on the list. New pool members are added to the bottom. Radio stations are handled the same way newspapers are, except the Department of Defense public affairs office maintains the list.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs convenes a meeting each quarter for those media organizations providing the

correspondents for that period. Each news organization selects its own correspondent and provides the name of the correspondent to the Department of Defense public affairs office at the quarterly meeting. The Department of Defense stipulates that the representative be an American citizen and have a valid passport. In order to be deployed, the representative must have current immunizations for a variety of diseases. These administrative matters are reviewed during the quarterly meeting. Pool members also must agree in advance to follow basic ground rules to protect operational security.

The ultimate decision to activate the media pool is made by the Secretary of Defense. When this happens, the Department of Defense pool coordinator notifies the media organization's bureau chief, who notifies the journalist. Usually the correspondent has only a few hours to report to Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C., board a plane and depart for the military event. At this time, neither the correspondent nor the bureau chief knows the destination. Pool members are told where they are going a few hours into the flight by the military media escorts who accompany them.

The DOD public affairs office provides correspondents with a list of items to bring, typically including a pair of well broken-in hiking boots with non-slip soles, a waterproof windbreaker, a sleeping bag and toiletries. For operational security reasons, correspondents are told to report to Andrews Air Force Base dressed for the current conditions in the Washington, D.C., area. Because the correspondents must be able to carry all of their own equipment, the DOD recommends easily portable, lightweight luggage. Any special clothing or

equipment needed in the field, such as parkas or protective masks, is the responsibility of the Commander in Chief of the area in which the military operation is taking place. Once on site, the Commander in Chief of the area is responsible for transportation, communications requirements, and accommodations for the media pool and the DOD media escorts.[3]

When the media pool arrives at its destination, members are briefed on the operation. The amount of access they have to specific areas and to the soldiers depends on the type of operation. When the media pool was sent to the Persian Gulf in 1987, pool members had almost unlimited access to areas on the ships and to crew members.[4] On some operations, the pool is taken on guided tours and given planned briefings. John Sawyer, pool reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, described an exercise in Alaska as "not a whole lot different than what maybe a congressman would have seen or any other VIP coming in for a close-up look at an operational exercise."[5]

Newsprint correspondents must turn their copy over to an escort for a security review before its transmission to Washington. If no violations are evident, the copy is transmitted by military communications to the Department of Defense, where it is released to other pool members and to interested news agencies for publication.[6] If the media product contains information that the media escort deems a potential security violation, the offending copy is brought to the attention of the correspondents. If the correspondents remove the offending copy, the product is transmitted by unclassified message for release. If the correspondents decide not to remove it, the product

is sent as a classified message, and the Department of Defense has the responsibility of either releasing the story or holding it until the material is no longer considered a security violation.[7]

Video tapes, audio tapes, and still photographs cannot be sent by military communications systems, so arrangements must be made for these to be picked up, by whatever means are available, and taken to a secure location, where they are picked up by media representatives for transmission to Washington. Audio reports also can be filed by phone. During the Persian Gulf deployment, helicopters, boats, and, in one case, a media aircraft, picked up video tapes and took them ashore.[8] Technological advances now allow rapid transmission of video and still photographs from portable satellite locations, but, for the most part, the media pool still uses ground stations to transmit products. Rarely does a military operation occur in an area that has the most modern facilities; and portable satellites are costly and cumbersome. Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Taylor, from the office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, said that the Department of Defense tried to use portable satellites once with a pool. "It turned out the equipment came in something like seven suitcases and weighed twelve-hundred pounds. It just didn't work," he said. "I anticipate that will happen [someday]. The technology is just not there yet."[9]

Media pool deployments can last for several days or just a few hours, depending on the operation. Because one of the purposes of the media pool is to allow access during the initial phase of an operation, the pool would be disbanded and the operation opened up as soon as possible to allow for unlimited news coverage.

Pool Activations

Since the media pool was formulated in 1985, it has been activated ten times. Seven of those instances were drills and three involved actual contingency operations.

The first test of the pool, in April 1985, involved secretly flying a group of correspondents to a military exercise in Honduras. Word of the operation leaked, which caused some officials to question whether the media could be entrusted with sensitive assignments.[10]

Problems were resolved in an after-action review conducted by the Pentagon with the participants. Procedures were improved during the next two pool exercises, and the fourth exercise, which involved 35,000 soldiers participating in maneuvers at Twenty Nine Palms, California, was declared a success by the Pentagon. No news of the operation was publicized, the Pentagon's planning time for activating the pool was cut in half, several positive news stories were published about the operation, and the time used to transmit pool products was reduced to less than half the time of previous exercises.

Media correspondents were somewhat reluctant, however, to declare the pool deployment a success. Vernon Guidry of the Baltimore Sun suggested that the logistics were not difficult, the military press officers were not working under a great deal of stress, and there was not a lot of military message traffic to compete with the media's needs like there would be in an actual military operation. Time's Alessandra Stanley commented that the press pool was accompanied by military press officers at all times and was escorted to briefing

points. She had reservations that the military would take the press along in a combat situation. "I just think that when push comes to shove, taking news people with all their equipment along is something they don't really want," she said.[11]

Problems were addressed and worked out at the after-action review, and the media pool was tested on two more occasions without a breach of security or significant problems.

On July 18, 1987, the pool was activated for the seventh time. Bureau chiefs were notified around 9 p.m. to have their correspondent at Andrews Air Force Base by midnight. Correspondents did not know until after they had departed Andrews that the activation was not a drill--this time, it was the real thing. The pool was to accompany U.S. Navy forces escorting Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. It would be the first real test of the pool concept.[12]

The ten-person pool, accompanied by three military escort officers, flew from Andrews to the United Arab Emirates port city of Fujairah, where they took a tugboat across the Gulf of Oman to the guided-missile cruiser USS Fox. A detailed memo by the second-in-command, Lieutenant Commander Charles S. Hamilton, outlined the purpose of the correspondent's visit and guidelines for them to follow. "The media pool's mission is to inform the public, enhance their understanding of Middle East Force operations, and explain U.S. forces' participation in escorting U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf," the memo said.[13]

Five of the correspondents remained on board the USS Fox and five were quartered on the guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd. The

correspondents had access to every portion of the ship except the radio room, where highly classified material was handled. According to pool member Tim Ahern, a reporter for the Associated Press, "In terms of access, the situation was about as good as a journalist could want."[14] Even during "general quarters," the highest state of alert for the ship, the correspondents were allowed to wander wherever they pleased.[15] Reporters on the USS Kidd even had access to the ship's word processor to write and print their stories.

The media pool plan was formulated by the Pentagon and U.S. Central Command, the unified command responsible for U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf. Ground rules included a security review of all pool material before transmission. The public affairs escorts, after reviewing the material, expedited the dispatch of pool products by whatever means were available.[16]

Problems and disagreements between the media and the military escorts surfaced regarding security reviews of material and transmission of the media products.

The first stories filed from each ship were about the reflagging of the Kuwaiti ships and interviews with the commander of the flotilla. The stories were reviewed first by the media escorts and then, much to the surprise and dismay of correspondents, by the ship's officers. Both Ahern of AP and Mark Thompson of Knight-Ridder Newspapers said they "felt strange" turning over their copy to be checked by Navy officers. Ahern said, "In future pools, perhaps the copy needs to carry some sort of flag pointing out that it has been

cleared by Navy officials. . . . It's information I think the readers ought to have."[17]

On one occasion, pool members wrote a story that included a reference to a toast (with beer) the Navy officers and tanker commanders had made to the success of the escort mission. Captain David Yonkers, commander of the flotilla, said it wouldn't look good for readers to know Navy officers had been drinking beer during such an important mission, and had the reference removed.

The initial stories were sent by military message as classified material, which meant that the copy had to be encoded before it was sent. Mark Thompson noted that it also meant that the pool members forfeited any control of the copy, because once it was classified, only the government could declassify.[18] When the material reached the Pentagon, it hit another snag--some stories were not released for several hours. Pentagon spokesman Robert Sims said, "We didn't delete anything from them or censor them in any way, but we did hold a few back until we were sure that future operations that were described in them wouldn't be compromised in any way."[19]

The pool correspondents did not find out about the copy delay until later, but bureau chiefs in Washington, awaiting news, were not happy about the delay. Chuck Lewis, Washington bureau chief for the Associated Press, said, "We can move thousands of words a minute. Here it takes [The Defense Department] nine hours to get us this story. I cannot understand why it takes so long."[20] Clark Hoyt, Washington bureau chief for Knight-Ridder Newspapers, sent a letter to Sims saying the slowness represented "censorship by delay."[21] He did

acknowledge, though, that because it was the first time the pool had covered a live operation, "some of these things have to be shaken out."[22]

The broadcast and still photographers had additional problems. Since the ship did not have facilities to transmit audio or visual materials, the media escorts made arrangements to shuttle the materials to Navy helicopters which would fly to the nearest transmission facility. The first material was not picked up until Thursday, four days into the operation. Another pick-up was made Friday.[23] In one instance, the media escorts arranged for a civilian helicopter to hover over the ship and pick up materials. Major Barry Willey, Army media escort officer, said that use of civilian aircraft was used only once in the operation, when the media escorts had to get the material off quickly and had no other means available.[24]

Still photos were a difficult area, too. "You can't security-review still photos unless you develop them, and if you don't have the capability on ship, which we didn't, then you are in a bind," Willey said.[25] Escorts had to stay with the photographers at all times to know if they were taking pictures of anything classified. Major Willey said that, in one case, there was some doubt about some pictures taken of captured Iranian equipment. "We had to hold it until we could get to port and develop it," he said. "That's not fair to him. The wire guys are sending their hot news by radio or message and you've got this photographer being held up."[26] The escorts decided that the best way to handle the matter was to send the film to

higher headquarters with a note about the content of the film and let the officials there determine whether it was classified or not.[27]

The first several days of the operation were uneventful as far as military operations were concerned. Having written their initial stories on the reflagging of the Kuwaiti ships with the American flag, the military's convoy escort mission, and the combat equipment and power of the ships, correspondents had taken to writing human interest and feature stories.

Then, shortly before 7 a.m. on July 24, the supertanker Bridgeton hit a mine as it was passing Iran's Farsi Island. Journalist Tim Ahern was standing on the bridge of the USS Kidd with Navy Lieutenant Norm Farley, the officer of the deck, when he heard a loud boom, followed by a big puff of white smoke rising above the Bridgeton. From the walkie-talkie in Farley's right hand came, "Juliet, Juliet, this is Rhine, we've been hit, we've been hit."[28] For the correspondents, the operation turned suddenly from a cruise in the Persian Gulf to a news event. Tim Ahern said that the real test for the media pool came Friday after the Bridgeton hit the mine. Thompson wrote, "If ever there was an opportune time for the military to impede the pool's work, that time was now."[29]

But DOD guidance was, "Should hostilities occur, pool members will be allowed to observe, photograph, and report on the situation to the fullest possible extent."[30] This guidance was implemented by Navy officials, who allowed the correspondents to roam at will. The Pentagon ordered the pool's material dispatched as quickly as possible to Washington, and Tim Ahern said, "The story I filed was the first

word released at the Pentagon."[31] In reference to the rapid transmission of media pool products, Knight-Ridder's Thompson said, "Apparently headquarters liked the idea of independent reports from the scene and didn't want them held up while on-scene commanders put their own spin on the day's events."[32]

Major Willey said the media escort officers made every attempt to avoid any delay in the transmission of material, because they understood the importance of getting the copy released in a timely manner.

According to Willey, part of the preparation for the pool's presence involved briefing the on-board personnel on media interviews. All interviews were arranged on a case-by-case basis and were on-the-record. He said:

> You get into a lot of trouble when you start going from on-the-record to background to off-the-record. People get mixed up and words get mixed up and things get printed that aren't supposed to get printed, so we determined to just have everything on the record.[33]

This policy included the sailors, who were told to stick with their own personal experiences and not venture off into speculative matters or dealings with foreign policy.

Captain William W. Mathis, commander of the USS Fox, told the correspondents before they departed the ship:

> I think you guys have been pretty damn honest with me, and I certainly think we've been open and aboveboard with you in almost every instance. There have been areas where the security restrictions have prevented us from giving you as much data as you would like, but, like all good newsmen, you kept asking for more, more, more--and we understand that.[34]

The journalists concluded that the first actual activation of the media pool was a success. Mark Thompson commented, "It was a success inasmuch as our audiences were better served for our having been there rather than at our Washington desks, and for having covered the escort operations."[35]

After the initial media pool deployment to the Persian Gulf, a DOD regional media pool was organized to provide continuing coverage for the Persian Gulf operation. The pool was smaller and most of the pool members were drawn from regional offices rather than from the Washington branch. Although this regional pool was not part of the DOD National Media Pool, its arrangement demonstrated the value of the media pool and the ability and willingness of the military to accommodate the media.[36]

In the meantime, the DOD National Media Pool was involved in one more exercise and two actual military combat operations. The pool was activated in May 1988, when U.S. military forces were deployed to Honduras and again in May 1989, when U.S. forces were sent to Panama to supplement existing forces. With each event, the media and the military compromised to resolve conflicts and problems.

The Media Pool--Conflicts and Compromises

The one program that appears to have had the greatest impact on improving the military/media relationship is the DOD National Media Pool. Both military and media participants have said they have a better understanding of one another as a result of participating in the pool.

The two justifications cited by Pentagon officials for denying media access to Grenada--safety of journalists and operational security--are considered moot issues. Military commanders have found that neither lack of accommodations nor safety of correspondents is justification for excluding the media from an operation.

Major Willey, planner and escort officer for the Persian Gulf media pool, said:

> [The media] are there to get their story and if it means they've got to stand up for three days or lay on the floor or sleep in the latrine, most of them will do that, most of them will endure lots of hardships. The fact that they might go into a danger zone and might come under fire--they'll be the first one to tell you--that's our job, don't worry about it. Put us out there, and let us do our job.[37]

Although the media are traditionally leery of secrecy, correspondents involved in the media pool have been very cooperative concerning operational security issues. Interviews with Pentagon correspondents indicate that proper handling of material that could be injurious to national security is a concern to those journalists who come in contact with classified material on a regular basis. Most of them believe the classification system is abused and are skeptical of security classifications. When involved in a military operation, however, correspondents readily concede to the military on matters that have the potential to jeopardize the event. Steven Emerson, senior military editor of U.S. News and World Report, believes that reporting in any national security area is one of the most sensitive tasks that a journalist faces.[38] Other correspondents expressed the same sense of responsibility toward preserving national security.

The most persistent conflicts between the media and the military during pool operations have involved what information should, or should not, be released. Jon Sawyer of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch said, "There is a lot of gray area as to what is permitted, what is considered significant information, and what the limits of censorship are supposed to be."[39]

The issue is illustrated in a misunderstanding that occurred between the media pool and military officials during the Alaskan media pool exercise. The print reporters compiled their notes and wrote a story about the military operation, which was a cold weather training exercise. They were looking for anecdotes to describe how cold it was, and one reporter said that a staff sergeant had told him it was like fighting "a mile-and-a-half a day war." They all liked the quote, so they put it in the story. The military escorts took the story to review it for possible security violations. Jon Sawyer described the event:

> All the public affairs officers huddled, they met with the brigade commander and his public relations people, and they were all obviously in great consternation about something. They came back and said they had a big problem with that quote . . . it is inaccurate information because soldiers in Alaska, even when it is forty below zero, can move a mile-and-a-half an hour, not a mile-and-a-half a day.[40]

To the reporters it was a harmless, descriptive phrase. Sawyer said:

> He [the sergeant] was talking metaphorically. He was trying to give an idea of just how cold and how sluggish it was. It was not a critical quote. It was a piece of color. To me, that quote does not mean literally that in Alaska you can only go a mile-and-a-half a day. To me that quote means it's really cold up there, it's hard to do anything."[41]

The military escort officers and the unit's commander took the quote literally. They were concerned that the phrase gave the perception that the soldiers on this exercise were not meeting Army standards.

Eliot Brenner, UPI reporter for the Alaskan media pool activation, said the episode raised the issue of escorts reading copy for content as opposed to reading it for classification. He said:

> We basically resolved that problem. The escorts understand they can point out a factual inaccuracy but they can't read for content. They can check for classification, and if you say an airplane has three wings, and they know it has two, they can point that out, but they can't read for content.[42]

Another issue in this same episode involved the sergeant who made the statement. The military officials brought him in from the field for questioning, and the staff sergeant understandably denied making the statement. Sawyer said:

> We [the reporters] didn't think it was the proper way to handle that. This was a quote we did not know would cause a problem for the sergeant. Certainly the lesson to me was that if you're trying to get a candid opinion from someone, particularly in a real combat situation, you would have to be very careful to protect that person. You would think twice before you quoted someone by name if he was saying something that could in any sense get him in trouble.[43]

Peter Grier of the Christian Science Monitor said that the military personnel on bases and at unit level are more open than those in higher echelons. He said:

> You have to make it clear that you are a reporter and that you are working on a story--that you're not just on a fact-finding mission from headquarters. They forget what you can do to them and they have no conception of things they say appearing in The Washington Post.[44]

Media pool reporters readily take material that is objectionable or could jeopardize an operation out of a story. Eliot Brenner said that when he was on an operation with the Navy off the coast of California, he wrote a story that contained references to future maneuver plans. Shortly after he gave the copy to the media escort officer for review, the admiral of the ship came in and said, "If you take the following stuff out of your story I'll move your story now." The material the admiral wanted taken out could always be provided in a later story after the event took place, Brenner said. "The important thing was to get a story out saying we were beating up on the bad guys. To me it was immaterial that a few pieces were dropped out."[45]

Molly Moore, reporter for The Washington Post, said that reporters don't always know what information should not be included in a story. "It is one of those learning experiences. It may be nice color to add to the story but it may not be absolutely essential. If you knew it was going to hold up your report, you wouldn't put it in," she said.[46]

Jon Sawyer suggested that sometimes the military handles a situation which creates an "us against them sort of mentality." In the case of the quote by the soldier in Alaska, he said that the military escorts could have come in and asked the reporters if they really needed the quote, "because we do have these standards and they have to be able to walk a mile-and-a-half an hour." Sawyer said, "If they had just come to us and said this particular quote is colorful but maybe it conveys the wrong information, it would have been taken care of."[47]

Peter Grier believes that the security review should be an informal process; that the media escorts or commander should sit down with the correspondents and explain why a particular item shouldn't be publicized. "Most of the Pentagon reporters I know would be perfectly willing to negotiate like that. A lot of times the information you are talking about isn't even crucial to the story," he said.[48]

Media pool correspondents who have taken part in exercises would like to have more freedom. In the Alaskan operation, correspondents were allowed to go to the brigade tactical operations center and attend after-action reviews, but were not allowed to go anywhere they wanted. Jon Sawyer indicated that there were places pool members wanted to go but were told they could not because there wasn't enough advance notice.[49] Grier said, "Once you've agreed to get carted around by the military, to a certain extent you've already lost your independence."[50]

For the most part, both military officials and media representatives consider the pool a success, despite some problems. Eliot Brenner has participated in four media pool operations, including operations in Alaska, Fort Campbell, Panama, and with the Navy off the California coast. He said it was a great experience. "By and large, it works well," he said.[51] Jon Sawyer agreed with that.

Peter Grier said that the use of a media pool to cover military operations is probably the best way to deal with everybody's concerns. "Any chance to get out of Washington and see an actual operation is valuable. I think that they [the media pool operations] could be used

as a tool to improve military/media relations," he said.[52] Grier suggested that, for exercise purposes, a pool in which the military invites correspondents from all over the country who do not necessarily have a lot of contact with the military would be beneficial, because it would familiarize more correspondents with military operations. He gave the example of a pool reporter who had been sent on a media pool activation and had no previous experience with military operations. He said:

> We [the pool members] were writing a pool report and this reporter wanted to put in the phrase 'puny little explosion' describing a couple of F-16s basically bombing the desert. We had to explain to him, 'Look, you've watched too many movies. Real life bombing demonstrations look and sound puny compared to the stuff that you've seen in Rambo.' That's the sort of thing that, if I were in the military, I would probably want to guard against.[53]

The Future of the Media Pool

The national media pool has been declared a success by the military and the media. Both groups agree that activating the pool under a variety of scenarios allows for refinement and improvement of existing procedures and discovery and correction of problem areas.[54] Success of the media pool in a combat situation in the future depends on the preparations done now.

Plans to accommodate the media pool have been written into the Joint Operations Plan, which describes in detail what needs to be done when U.S. military forces are deployed. Such planning should now be included in the preparations for any operation, regardless of the operation's classification.[55]

The office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs is putting together a DOD instruction on the media pool. No such instruction exists right now because officials wanted to maintain flexibility. Lieutenant Commander Gregg Hartung, plans officer for DOD public affairs office, said, "We're learning that having maximum flexibility isn't helping us sometimes because there's not minimum amount of knowledge in the field."[56] When some sort of instruction is published, those in the field will know what to expect and how to prepare for the media pool.

The media appear to be optimistic about the pool, but some correspondents are not sure it will be used in time of war. Molly Moore of The Washington Post still has her doubts that the pool will work in a wartime situation. "They work fairly well in these drills, but the problem is in a real time war situation we're not going to be a very high priority," she said.[57]

Jon Sawyer said that he hopes it will work in time of war, and he has the impression from the military public relations people that the pool would be activated in a combat situation. In peacetime, he believes that the military should activate the pool at least two or three times a year, just so that it becomes routine.[58]

The military is confident about the future of the pool. Lieutenant Colonel Taylor said that when the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were asked by military officials if they should send the media pool with the troop deployment to Panama, both of them said, without even questioning it, "Of course." Taylor said:

> It is something that is talked about all the time. When people start talking about exercises, at some point during that conversation, they talk about pools. It's getting ingrained into the system and I think it will be with us for a long time.[59]

Media/Military Relations

Problems exist between the military and the media when it comes to covering military operations, but these can be handled by discovering what the problems are, acknowledging that they exist, and working to resolve them by whatever means is necessary. Technical problems can be solved through better use of resources and making use of technological improvements. The difficult problems to resolve are those that involve professional differences between the media and the military. There are, in the words of military journalist Donald Atwell Zoll, "sharp divisions of opinion on quite fundamental value issues between many journalists and soldiers."[60]

The Sidle Commission recognized the divisions of opinion on fundamental issues and reported, "Any current actual or perceived lack of mutual understanding and cooperation could be largely eliminated through the time-tested vehicle of having reasonable people sit down with reasonable people and discuss their problems."[61]

The final recommendation of the Sidle Commission was to develop a program to improve military/media relations through regular meetings between military officials and media representatives and through increased public affairs instruction at military service schools. Even though these recommendations were initiated, there remains a mixed review of the relationship. Interviews with some

correspondents and military public affairs officers indicate that the military/media relationship has improved over the past several years. There is not, however, consensus on this issue with professionals in either field.

Having participated in several meetings between the military and the media intended to diffuse the bitterness between the two professions, Richard Halloran wrote:

> There's not much evidence of progress. In session after session, the same questions and allegations come up from military officers and many of the same answers are given by journalists. Few explanations from journalists seem to be getting through. . . . Nor is there much evidence that military concerns are getting through to editors.[62]

He came to the conclusion that military people do not know very much about the press and television. According to Halloran, in random samples of seminar audiences with 300 officers, most of them majors or above, fewer than half have ever talked seriously with a journalist. Few have examined the First Amendment or the roles that correspondents have played in the military history of the United States.[63]

Military public affairs expert Colonel Gerald W. Sharpe suggested that the Army's problems with the media are primarily caused by a negative attitude held by some senior officers. Like Halloran, he found that many senior officers have never dealt with the media and most have had no formal training on how the media work or their role and mission in society. Sharpe recommended that the Army develop a plan to change the negative attitude currently held by many senior officers. His recommendations were along the same lines as those of

the Sidle Commission--education and exposure to the media through meetings, seminars and even social gatherings.[64]

Colonel Sharpe conducted a survey of Army War College students concerning their perceptions of the media. Their responses indicated that a great deal of mistrust and misunderstanding of the media may exist in the upper echelons of the military. When asked to give their views on the chief causes of conflict between the Army and the media, responses included statements such as "lack of balance in presentation," "the media are more interested in profit than the . . . truth," and "low professional integrity [in the media]." Many faulted the media for a lack of knowledge of the military. But many officers faulted the Army for contributing to the conflict. They suggested that the Army doesn't present itself well and has a poor public affairs policy which tries to hide information. In addition, the officers said that many Army officers don't know how the media work, don't understand the role of a free press in American society, and have narrow perspectives on non-military matters. When asked for recommendations on how to reduce the conflict, the vast majority of those responding suggested that honesty with the media, exposure to the media, and education for both institutions would help.[65]

Results of a recent informal survey conducted of Command and General Staff College students indicated that some younger officers seem to mistrust the media. Of the sixteen randomly selected officers surveyed, more than half believed that the media were biased against the Army.[66]

Peter Braestrup described the conflict that exists as a built-in "cultural" conflict. "The life of the journalist appeals to certain personality types, but recruits to journalism are usually very different from those who join the military," he said.[67] Each profession tends to attract different personality types and foster different sets of values. Military officers respect tradition and authority, tend to be conservative in social attitudes and behavior, and reflect the norms of society. Journalists have the job of challenging official wisdom and tend to be irreverent and skeptical of authority.[68]

The relationship was described succinctly by Doug Clifton of Knight-Ridder. "Let's face it," he said, "the Pentagon has one agenda and the news media have another agenda and quite often they are in conflict."[69]

There is speculation that the relationship should be somewhat adversarial. Commodore Jack Garrow said:

> "We're never going to get to the point where there'll be harmony. The country requires an aggressive press corps just as it requires an aggressive military. If we ever get to the point where the press is tame we'll be in deep trouble."[70]

Steven Emerson of U.S. News & World Report, said:

> I think there is going to be a natural tension no matter what occurs, but I think there has to be a greater understanding by the military that the press is not out to get them and, conversely, I think that a lot of people in the press must come to the realization that the military is not an evil institution.[71]

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since Grenada, the military/media relationship has evolved from one in which correspondents were misled and barred from the battlefield to a relationship in which reporters are transported to the scene of a military operation, sometimes halfway across the world, so that they can provide on-the-scene coverage and independent accounts of a military event. Both institutions have quarreled, compromised, and cooperated to establish a working relationship.

The use of a media pool has played a significant role in the development of a much improved relationship between the military and the media since Grenada. By institutionalizing the media pool concept, the Department of Defense established procedures to accommodate the media and allow access to military events without compromising the security of the military operation. This access has allowed the media to fulfill their constitutional function of informing the people about the activities of the government.

Another notable benefit of the media pool has been the mutual understanding that has developed between professionals in these two institutions. Journalist Jon Sawyer said that when military officers and correspondents are working in the media pool, "you're working together to get information out that is as accurate as both sides can

make it. I think that is a constructive, good thing. That is in the interest of both of us."[1] The end result is to everyone's benefit--the military's, the media's, and the public's.

But the DOD National Media Pool is not the panacea for the media/military conflict. The limits of the pool restrict its usefulness toward resolving the conflict. The national media pool, by definition, allows only a select group of correspondents access to military operations. Those media organizations without Washington bureaus are not part of the pool. Although they may benefit from pool products, they do not get the benefits from participation. By the same token, only a limited number of military officers have the opportunity to work with media correspondents. For those individuals, perhaps the suspicion and mistrust exhibited by the military during Grenada have dissolved and been replaced by mutual understanding. For many, however, there is still resentment and suspicion.

My research has led me to conclude that it is essential, for both the military and the media, to establish and maintain a working relationship that will allow both institutions to fulfill their obligation toward the maintenance of democracy.

To expect total trust by the media or complete openness by the military is expecting members of both institutions to be remiss in their duties. For, if any government agency was the sole arbiter of what was to remain classified, the press would be subservient to how the government defined national security. Security as defined by the government sometimes leads to an excess of power. This is evident from the misdeeds of the government in such cases as Watergate and the

Iran-Contra affair. The military, on the other hand, is charged with the maintenance of national security. It is not the duty of a military officer to question whether information that has been classified is a true state secret. His duty is to protect that information.

Given these differences in the values and objectives of the two institutions, one can hardly expect a trusting and open relationship. But there must be a working relationship. To obtain this, I recommend that the military continue efforts to improve and institutionalize the DOD National Media Pool. Despite its limitations, it must be credited with improving military/media relations.

I also believe that career officer and noncommissioned officer service schools should have more classroom instruction on military/media relations. Officers and senior enlisted soldiers need to understand the meaning of the First Amendment and the role of the free press in a democratic society.

Regional media pools should be developed to supplement the national media pool. Most area commanders handle media coverage of local operations on an ad hoc basis. Guidance from the Department of Defense could improve area media coverage.

For their part, media organizations can ensure that correspondents who cover military events are familiar with military affairs and the manner in which the military operates. The media representatives need education on the military's function in the maintenance of democracy, and then need to exercise judgment and responsibility in the use of sensitive information.

Both institutions play a vital role in the maintenance of democracy. One of our greatest strengths, as a nation, is an able-bodied, highly trained, and well-equipped military. Yet it must always be remembered that one of our greatest strengths, as a people, is the freedom of expression--the freedom to speak, write, and publish information concerning the activities of the government so that citizens can make informed, responsible decisions regarding the operation of their government.

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[31]Knightley, 272-274.

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MEDIA ACCESS TO UNITED STATES MILITARY OPERATIONS: GRENADA AND BEYOND

by

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B. S., Kansas State University, 1983

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements of the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Journalism and Mass Communications

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1989

This thesis examines the current issues involving media access to United States military battlefield events during combat operations. It provides useful information in designing future policies for media access to such operations and assists journalists and military officers to understand and appreciate each other's perspective.

The thesis discusses the historical evolution of the relationship between the United States military and the media. Each conflict from the American Revolution to the Grenada invasion is examined. The study then focuses on the debate that immediately followed the media exclusion during the Grenada invasion. The military's justification for the exclusion and the media's arguments to justify media coverage of combat operations are examined. Issues involving freedom of the press and national security are examined. Supreme Court decisions that set a precedent for either media access or media exclusion from government activities are studied. Qualitative research of professional media publications, law journals, general readership periodicals, and military journals was employed for this portion.

Post-Grenada developments are examined to determine the current condition of the military/media relationship and media access to combat operations. Interviews were conducted with military and media representatives concerning the effectiveness of the measures taken to conduct military operations in a manner that safeguards the military and protects the security of the operation while allowing the media to keep the public informed.